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JULY 2018 VOL 29 NO 10

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NATHANIEL RATELIFF
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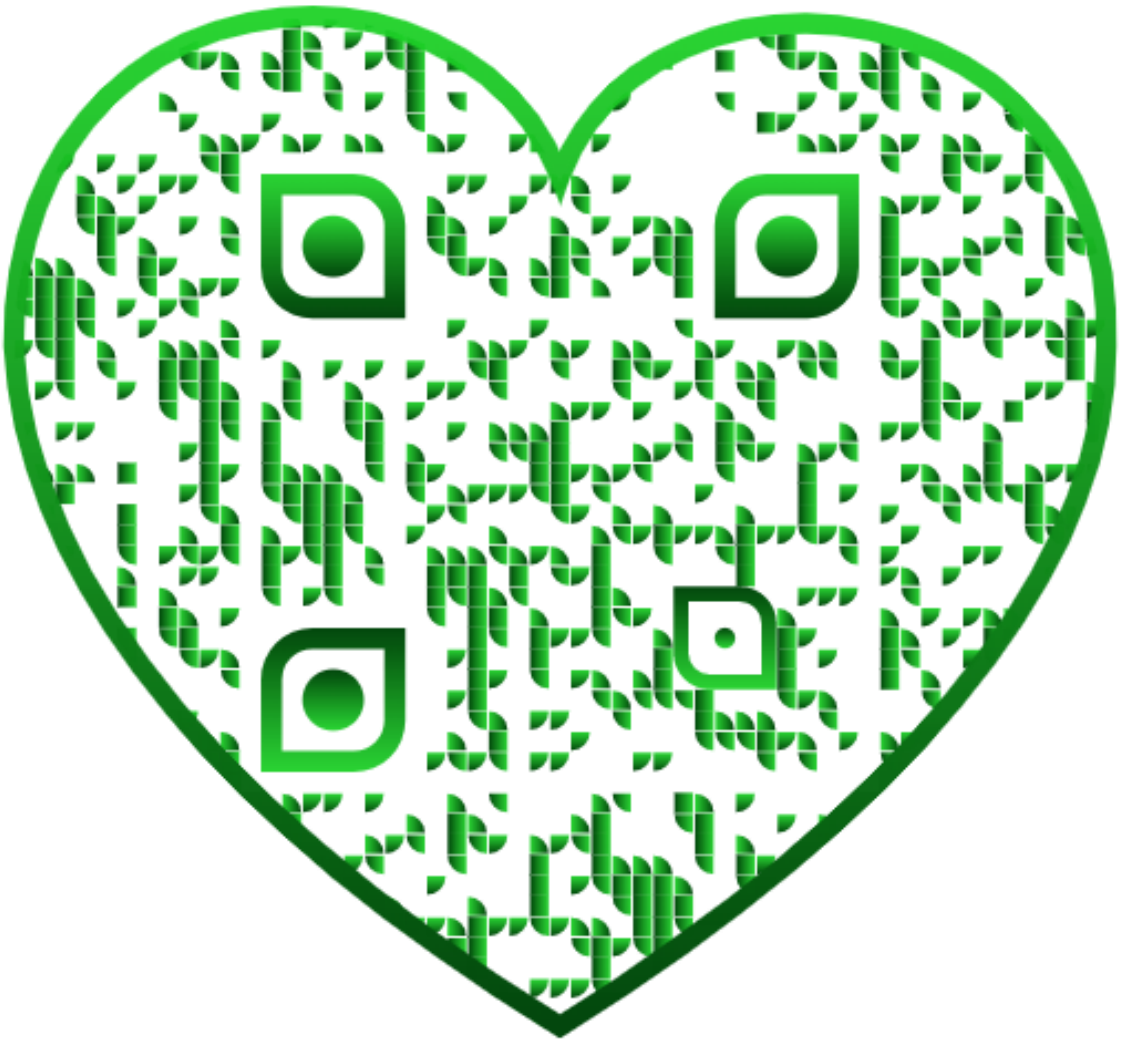

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Get Your Fix

Here at *The Guitar Magazine*, we've always got your best interests at heart. Okay, so every month we present you with a tantalising array of the finest new and vintage guitar gear on the planet, and that inevitably leads us all into temptation. But a mainstay of the magazine throughout its history has been the idea of doing things yourself.

Guitar DIY – whether a simple repair, a tone-improving mod or a full-on build project – is something we know you love. It's fun, rewarding and can save you money. If your old faithful electric or acoustic is a little under the weather and in need of some TLC, before you pick up the phone to a local guitar tech, read this month's 12-page guitar survival guide from p10 onwards. With a little guidance, even the most ham-fisted among us (and I definitely feature in that category!) can perform basic fixes without a visit to the guitar emergency room.

Elsewhere in the mag this month we catch up with one of my favourite bands of recent times in the shape of Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats and get the skinny on their heady brew of raw soul, rock and R&B. Turn to p64 to read the interview and get up-close with their live gear.

We also have one of the coolest guitar collections on the planet in this month's issue. If you are signed up to Instagram then you'll almost certainly recognise some of instruments on show – head to p26 now and prepare to drool. What was that I said about saving you money?

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In This Issue...

THIS MONTH'S EXPERTS...

DAVE HUNTER

Dave Hunter is a writer and musician who has worked in the US and the UK. A former editor of this title, he is the author of *The Guitar Amp Handbook*, *Guitar Effects Pedals*, *Amped* and *The Fender Telecaster*. Check out his column on p24

HUW PRICE

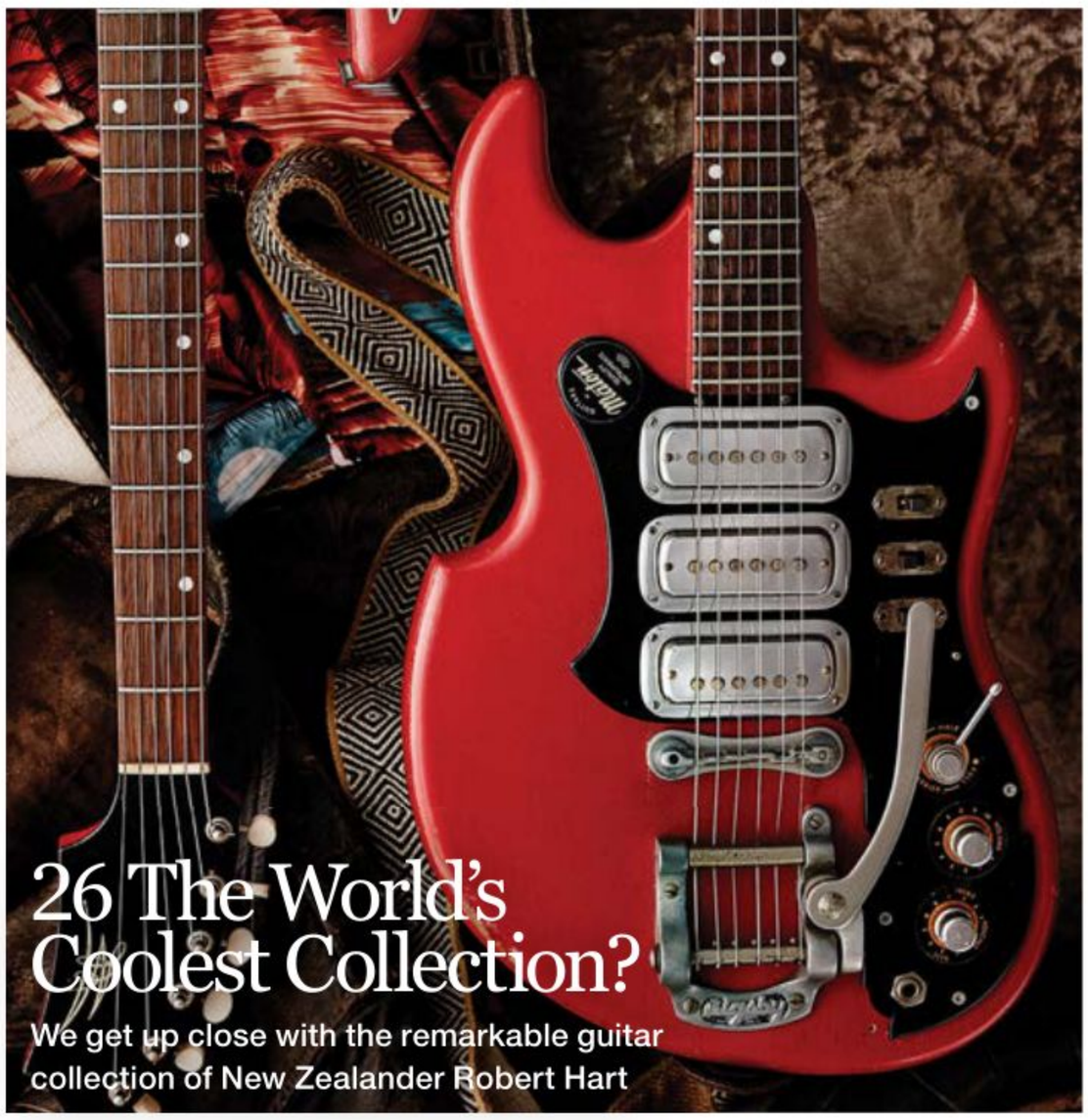
Huw spent 16 years as a pro audio engineer, working with the likes of David Bowie, Primal Scream and Nick Cave. His book, *Recording Guitar & Bass*, was published in 2002, leading into his career in guitar journalism. He also builds and maintains guitars, amps & pedals

RICHARD PURVIS

A reformed drummer, Richard has been gigging for over 20 years as a guitarist and bassist, and working as a music journalist for almost as long. He also composes music for television, and is legally married to his 1966 Gibson Melody Maker

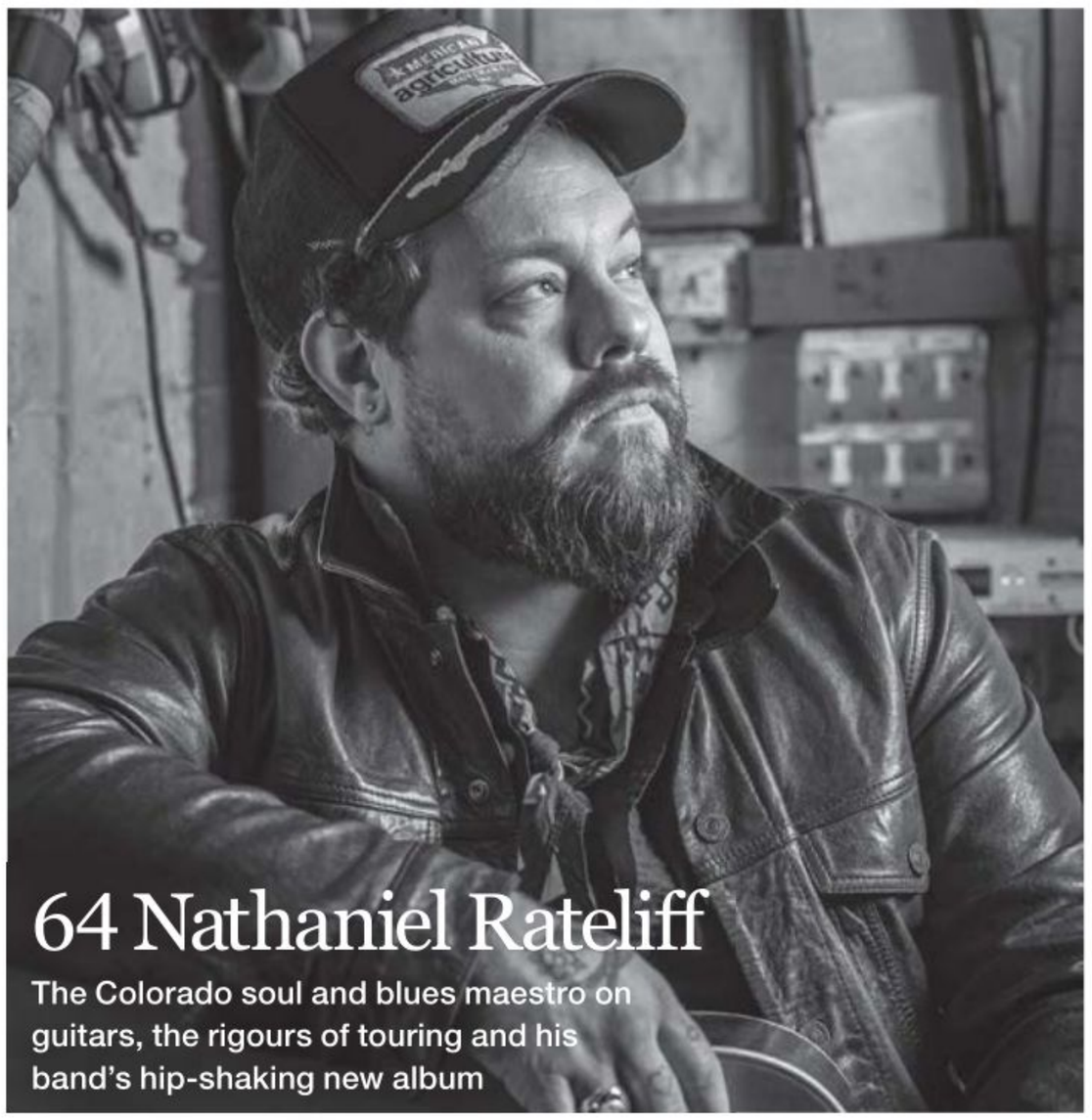
10 Fix Your Guitar

Keep your guitar in fine fettle and save money with our essential guide to at-home maintenance



26 The World's Coolest Collection?

We get up close with the remarkable guitar collection of New Zealander Robert Hart



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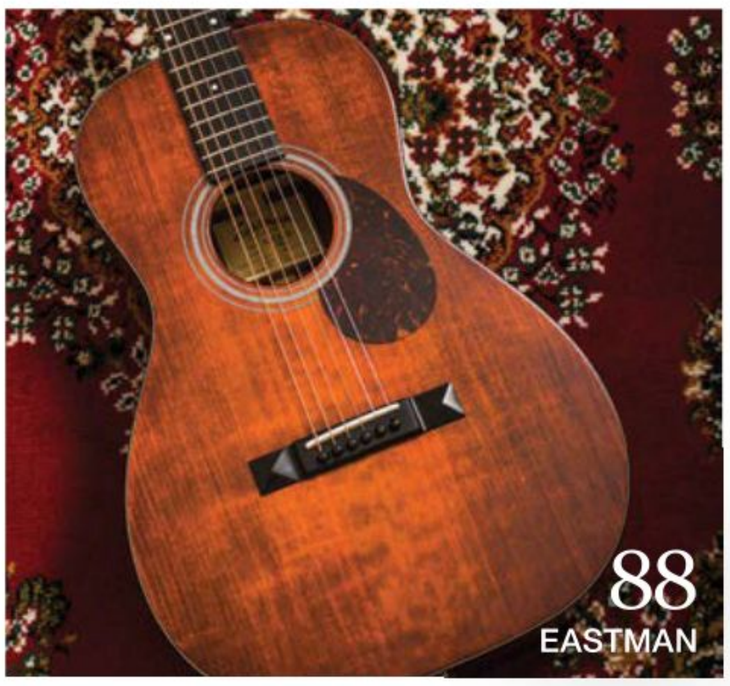
84 TV Star

TV Jones doesn't just do pickups, we find out if his Spectra Sonic Supreme lives up to his pedigree



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THE *Money Shot*

NOVO SERUS J

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Our first experience of Dennis Fano's Novo Guitars saw the Serus score a perfect 10 in the brand's first UK review back in 2016. Subsequent encounters with a Mastery vibrato-equipped Serus J in 2017 and a visit to the Novo workshop in Nashville that summer only cemented our belief that Dennis and his team are building some of the very finest bolt-on electrics in the world.

Resplendent in a gloriously distressed Antigua finish, this J model is further proof that sweating the small stuff pays off. The lightweight body of reclaimed, tempered pine still bears a few nail holes as evidence of its former life, and in combination with the clever Schroeder wrapover bridge – milled from lightweight aluminium and loaded with brass saddles – it's a recipe for an addictive cocktail of sustain, snap and resonance.

As ever, it's Novo's tempered maple neck that steals the show. The wonderfully tapered medium C profile, thin finish, beautifully softened rosewood 'board edges and rounded fret ends combine to evoke the familiar feel of an instrument that's been played and played.

It sounds great, too – Novo's Amalfitano P-90s are seriously toneful. Sadly this guitar is already sold, but head to www.coda-music.com to peruse current stock, and you can hear it in action at youtube.com/theguitarmagazine.

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FIX YOUR GUITAR

We know, we know… you'd rather play your guitar than spend time fixing it up. But if you want it to play well, and if you want to be able to rely on it for gigs and jam sessions, then our practical guide to quick and easy tweaks and repairs – from truss rod tweaking to fret-slot fettling – will give you all the info you need. Step this way as Huw Price shows you how to perform all kinds of routine repairs that'll make a trip to the luthier a thing of the past…

The common thread running through all our DIY and workshop features is our desire to encourage self-sufficiency in guitar owners, and save you money. If you understand the principles and get hands-on with basic maintenance, then you'll make informed decisions about when a trip to the luthier is really necessary, or whether a minor tweak at home can solve a problem. That's what this feature is all about.

There are obvious parallels between car and guitar maintenance, and a guitar owner's relationship with the luthier can often follow a similar dynamic to that of the car owner and their mechanic. For example, if you've ever owned an old Alfa Romeo, you may be aware of something called the 'Italian tune-up'. The scenario goes something like this: the owner takes great care of his car, never driving too fast, always accelerating gently and keeping the revs well below the red line. But every few months, the car begins to feel sluggish and unresponsive, so the owner decides it needs a tune-up and takes it to the garage.

The mechanic pretends to listen carefully as the owner details all the symptoms, waits until he's out of sight, then takes the car for a long spin so he can rev the crap out of the engine – literally. Having burned and blown away the carbon deposits that have formed because the engine isn't being used as intended, the mechanic returns with a big grin and writes an invoice. The owner is delighted the 'tune up' has got the car running as it's supposed to again, and the mechanic is delighted because he knows he'll soon be doing it all again.

Yet if the owner was a bit more savvy, they could have saved themselves some cash and hassle, and it's exactly the same with many common guitar ailments. By the end of this feature our aim is that you'll have all the knowledge you need to perform the guitar equivalent of the Italian tune-up on your gear. So, with our sleeves duly rolled up, let's crack on…

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TRUSS ROD BASICS

YOUR GUITAR MAINTENANCE TOOLKIT

Here's a suggested list of tools to invest in to carry out the majority of routine guitar-maintenance tasks…

- **VARIOUS FLAT- AND CROSS-HEAD SCREWDRIVERS**
- **A SET OF ALLEN KEYS**
- **A STRING WINDER**
- **PLIERS WITH WIRE SNIPS**
- **A SOLDERING IRON**
- **A MULTIMETER**
- **GUITAR LUBE**
- **LIGHTER FLUID**
- **FINGERBOARD OIL/ CONDITIONER**
- **A SOCKET SET/TRUSS ROD TOOLS**
- **FINISH REVIVER/POLISH**
- **SPARE BATTERIES**

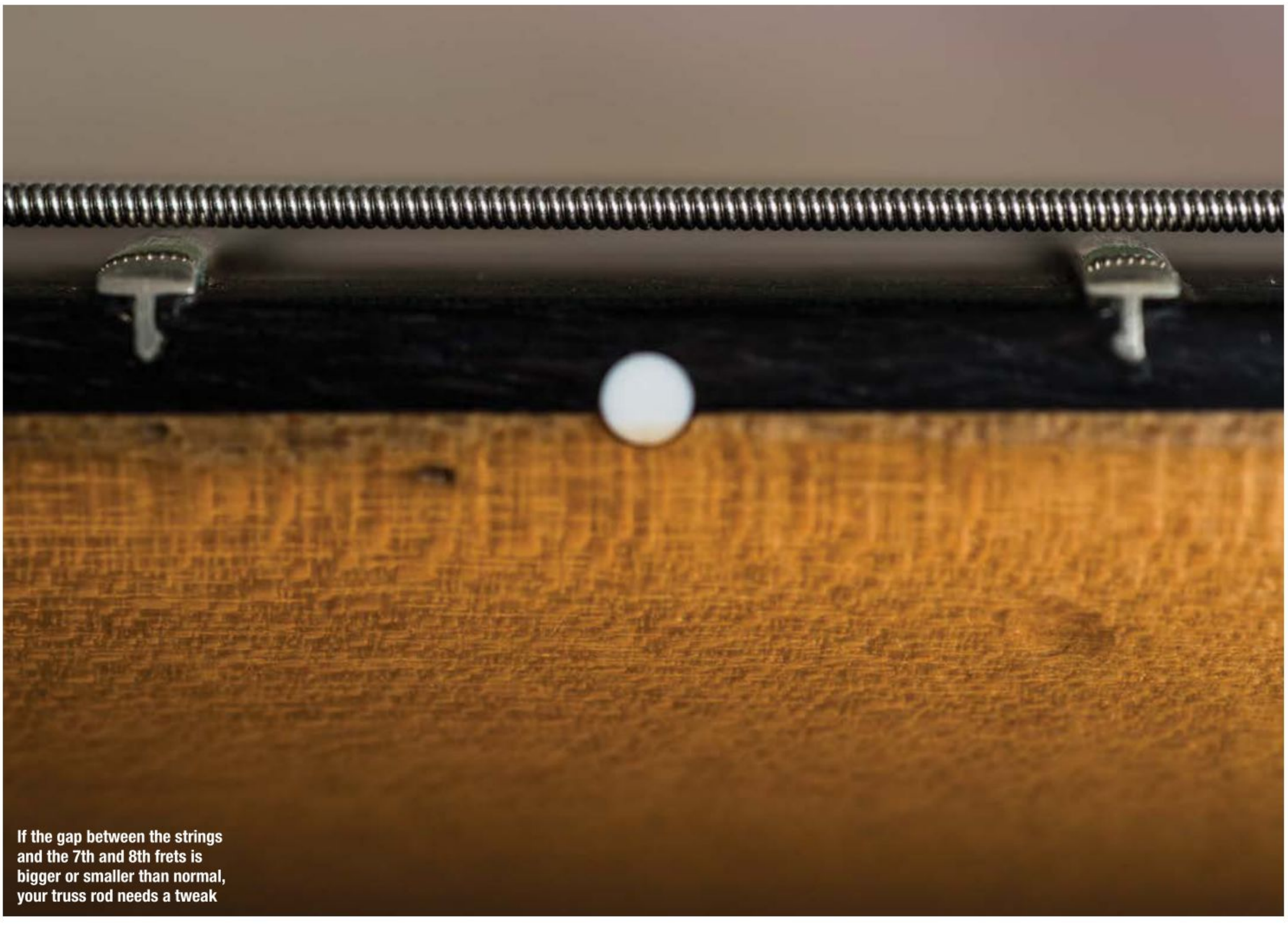
If any aspect of routine guitar maintenance comes closest to the Italian tune-up analogy, it's truss rod adjustment. Research the subject and you'll encounter dire warnings on the dangers of amateurs wielding truss rod wrenches and how this delicate operation must be left to 'qualified luthiers'. What constitutes a 'qualified luthier' remains a mystery; but on your next visit, try asking to see your luthier's qualifications. I know exactly what the response would be if I asked my favourite luthier, but we wouldn't be able to print it. Suffice to say, every 'qualified luthier' had to start somewhere – most likely by getting stuck in to the very tasks we'll show you how to do in this feature.

Getting back to truss rods, many techs get busier twice a year, when clients call to say their guitars need setting up. These periods tend to coincide with the weather getting colder during autumn and warmer during spring. In most instances, these changes in the weather will cause necks to bow up or down: the tell-tale symptoms are a change in a guitar's action, and intonation that sounds a bit off. If you think it through, it's highly unlikely that a bridge's height has spontaneously shifted, or its saddles have moved – and on an acoustic, they can't move – so any sudden change has to be attributed to a neck responding to changes in atmospheric conditions. Necks are always moving to some extent, which could be why your guitar feels better on some days than others. Truss rod adjustment may also be necessary if you swap to a different string gauge, or even a new brand of the same gauge.

TRUSS YOURSELF

The first step to take is to determine what's going on with the neck. Only three specialist tools are required here – your ears, your fingers and your eyes. Some use feeler gauges, but in the real world of worn and uneven frets, their usefulness is moot. If the strings feel higher than before and notes played at the 12th fret sound sharp of the 12th fret harmonic, the neck may have bowed upwards. Place one finger on the first fret of the sixth (low E) string and the thumb of your other hand on the same string at the fret where the neck joins the body, and then check the gap between the string and the top of the 7th or 8th fret. There should be a very slight gap, but if this seems greater than usual, that confirms there's a slight forward bow and the truss rod needs to be tightened. The gap is called 'neck relief'.

Conversely, if your action feels too low and you're experiencing fret buzzing and choke outs when bending strings, the neck may have bowed backwards. If the intonation test reveals that fretted notes at the 12th sound flat to the harmonic and the finger test shows the string touching the 7th or 8th frets, you can be pretty certain there's a back bow, and it can be corrected by loosening the truss rod. Accessing the truss rod adjustment point isn't always easy. If it's at the headstock end, there may be a cover that has to be removed, or the end of the truss rod may be hidden away



If the gap between the strings and the 7th and 8th frets is bigger or smaller than normal, your truss rod needs a tweak

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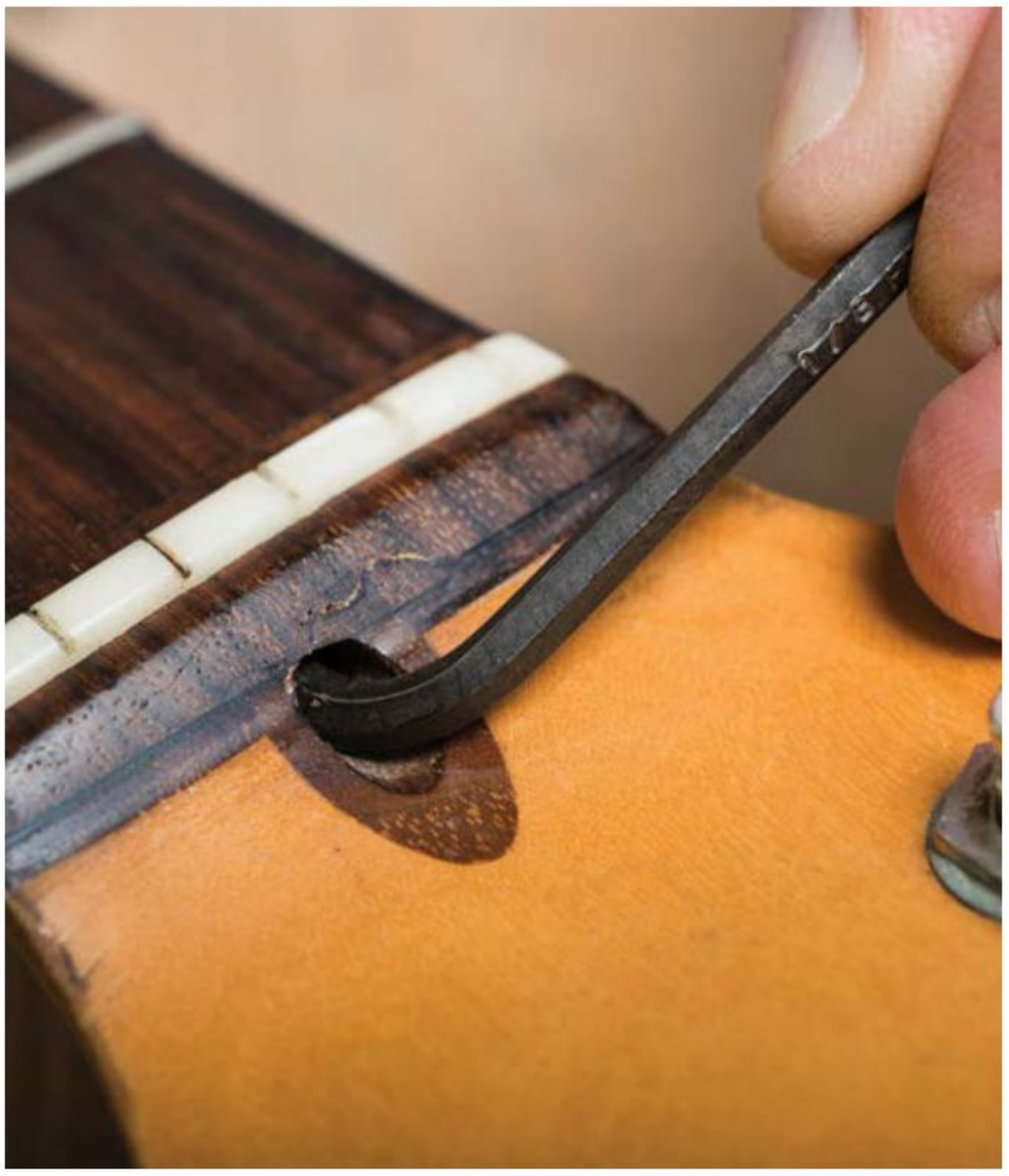

a centimetre of more inside a drilled hole. In a famous example of Leo Fender not actually getting everything right the first time around, vintage Fender-style necks have their truss rod adjustment at the body end, meaning you may not be able to adjust the rod in situ without damaging the pickguard or the finish.

Ideally, truss rod adjustments are made while the neck is under string tension, but with those vintage Fender-style necks, this usually isn't possible. Fortunately, you don't have to remove the neck entirely to do the job, but you will need to slacken the strings right off. We suggest putting a capo on the 1st fret to keep the strings in their nut slots and wrapped around their tuner posts before loosening the neck screws. Try and ease the neck upwards in its pocket until you see the truss rod screw.

When adjusting truss rods, there are two key things to remember – always use the correct tool and work slowly. If the truss rod access is at the body end, you'll most likely need a sturdy cross-head screwdriver. Gibson- and PRS-style necks usually feature a nut at the end of the truss rod, so you can use the appropriately sized socket from a socket set, or buy a wrench specially for the job. Specialist suppliers such as Allparts UK and Tonetech may be able to help, and you can often find what you need on eBay. Recessed truss rods at the headstock end usually require an Allen key. Sometimes, the hardest part is finding one of the correct size, because Fenders made in the US, Mexico and the Far East all have different sizes – in metric and imperial. Again, you can use a specialist supplier, or take your guitar to a really good hardware store that keeps a large selection of Allen keys sold individually.

IDEALLY, TRUSS ROD ADJUSTMENTS ARE MADE WHILE THE NECK IS UNDER STRING TENSION

LEFTY LOOSEY, RIGHTY TIGHTY

Working slowly means checking the neck relief every quarter turn – and of course, this takes a little longer when you have to tighten the neck bolts and re-tune the strings every time. To tighten a truss rod, turn it clockwise and to slacken it, turn anticlockwise. If the truss rod doesn't turn easily and you feel as if you're needing to apply real force, consult a pro. Truss rods are only designed for minor corrections and cannot fix badly bent or warped necks. What's more, only dual-action rods can correct a back bow. If, after a full turn, the neck problem remains, it's time to take your guitar to the repairers. Fortunately, major issues seldom happen, and we can all perform minor truss rod tweaks that will keep our guitars playing as they should.

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ISSUES WITH ELECTRONICS

We've all suffered from 'pot scratch fever' from time to time, and unwanted electrical noises periodically crop up with any electric guitar. The all-too-familiar symptoms include crackly pots, sticky switches, intermittent jacks and hum. When these things happen, it's all too tempting to rip all the guts out and change everything, but repairs are often an easier and cheaper alternative to replacement. Let's start with noisy pots, because they're the most common electronic problem. Before going any further, we need to determine if that scratchy sound really is coming from the volume pot or somewhere else. Try swapping to another guitar to see if that sounds scratchy, too. If every guitar sounds scratchy through your amp, the problem is more likely to be stray current from the amp leaking through the guitar cable.

Try putting a buffered pedal between your guitar and amp, and see if that cures the noise problem. Any Boss pedal will do, and many tuners are also buffered. If this cures the scratchiness, it's time to call the amp tech rather than your luthier. Incidentally, buffered pedals sometimes cure scratchy wah pedals, too.

If you're still left with scratchy noises, there may be dirt or oxidisation in the potentiometers, so they'll need cleaning. You'll need contact cleaner, which comes in aerosols with an extension tube for the spray nozzle. The tube lets you direct the product into the pot casing – so long as you can get at the pot. Things can be trickier with semis, because there's no direct access to the electronics. Check out a product called the Pot Cleaning Cap, because it slips over the pot shaft – once you have removed the knob – and enables you to force cleaner into the pot. Popular cleaners include Servisol and DeoxIT. Some contain lubricant, too, which will help your treated pots turn more freely. Just in case you weren't already aware, WD-40 is *not* a contact cleaner. After treatment, if the pot is still noisy or cutting out in certain areas, it probably does need replacing.

IF YOU HAVE PERSISTENT SCRATCHY NOISES, THERE MAY BE DIRT OR OXIDISATION IN THE POTS, SO THEY'LL NEED CLEANING

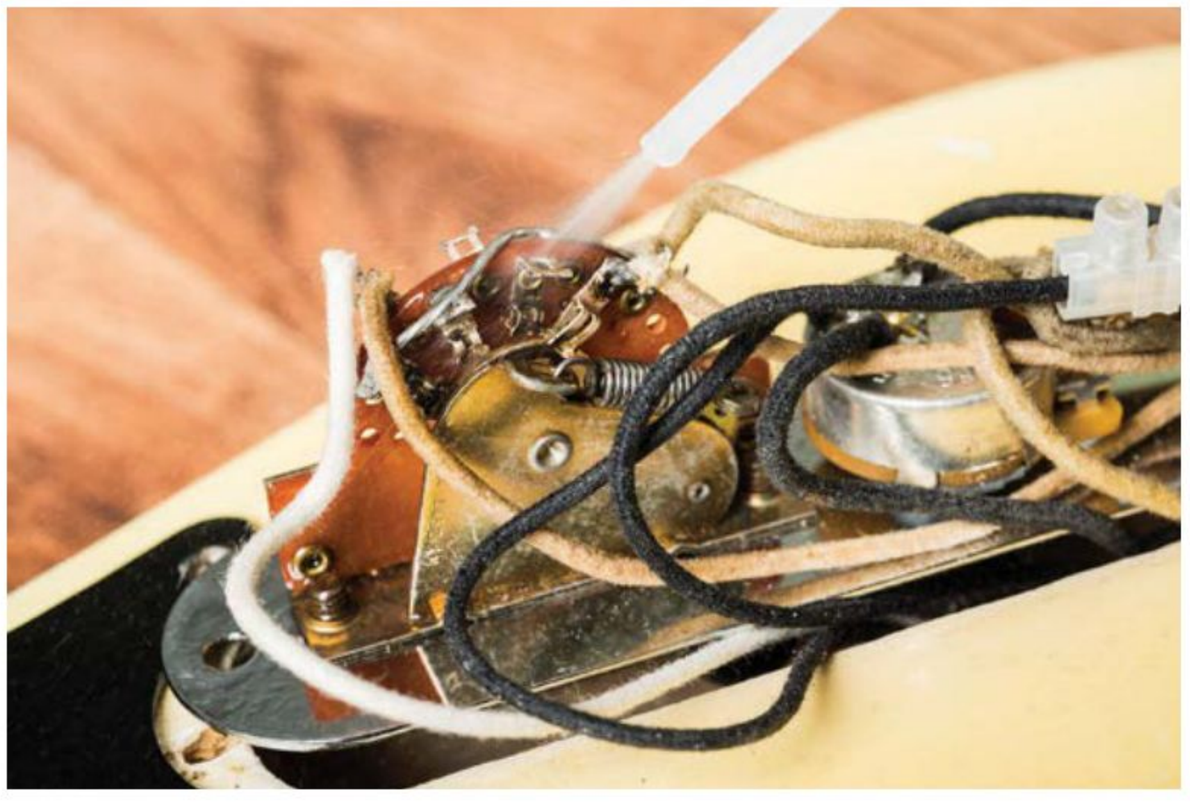
SOCKET TO 'EM

Switches can get noisy and stiff. In fact, the 1963 Olympic White Strat we featured in the previous issue arrived with a switch that would barely move. After spraying the contacts with Servisol, we applied 3-In-1 oil to the switch's pivot point and let it soak in. After a few minutes, the 55-year-old switch was operating like it was brand new. Jack sockets sometimes become intermittent and if this is happening, hit a chord and wiggle the cable in the vicinity of the output socket. If signal cuts in and out, try a different cable, and if it stops happening, you'll know it's a cable issue rather than the output socket.

Let's assume swapping cables doesn't cure it, and the jack socket is the most likely culprit. Two things are possible – firstly, the jack socket has lost some of its springiness and the tip connection is making intermittent contact with the jack plug. If you can get at the jack, try gently bending the tip connector towards the centre using pliers.

The second issue may be oxidisation on the contacts. You could try putting some contact cleaner onto a cotton bud and giving the contacts a scrub. Very fine Wet And Dry abrasive can also be used to remove the gunk and reveal untarnished metal. If your guitar has started generating a load of hum, there could be a fault with its ground connection. You can test this by connecting a wire from the metal outside casing of the output jack (ground) to the guitar's bridge. If this reduces or eliminates the hum, you'll need to find the broken connection. Alternatively, you can use a multimeter to test for continuity between the bridge and ground. If there's no continuity, a visual inspection of the wiring will usually identify a broken joint that needs to be resoldered.

Many noise issues can be fixed with a the application of some contact cleaner, but if your wires are badly frayed or hanging off their contacts, then you'll need to get your soldering iron out…



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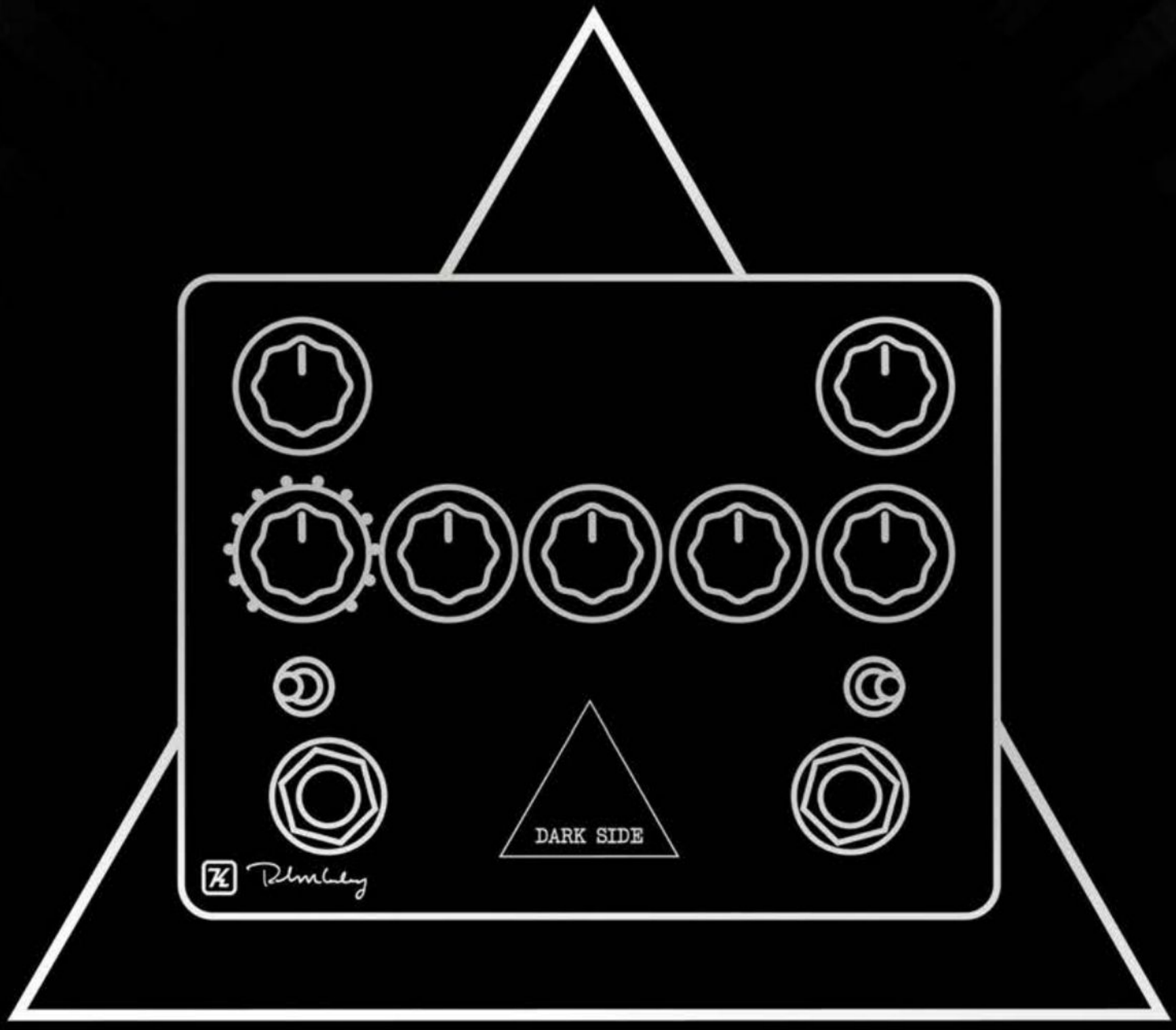

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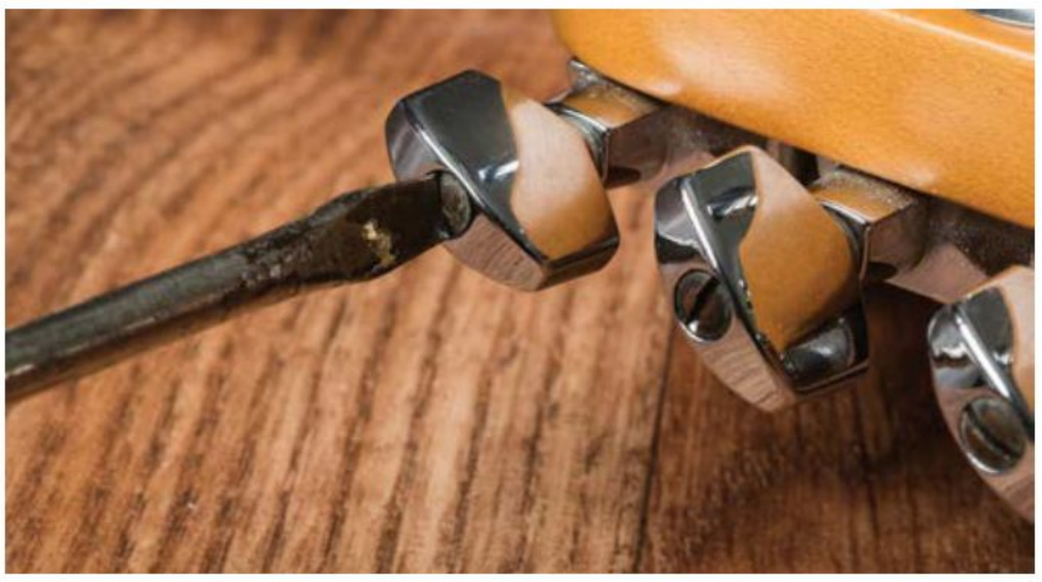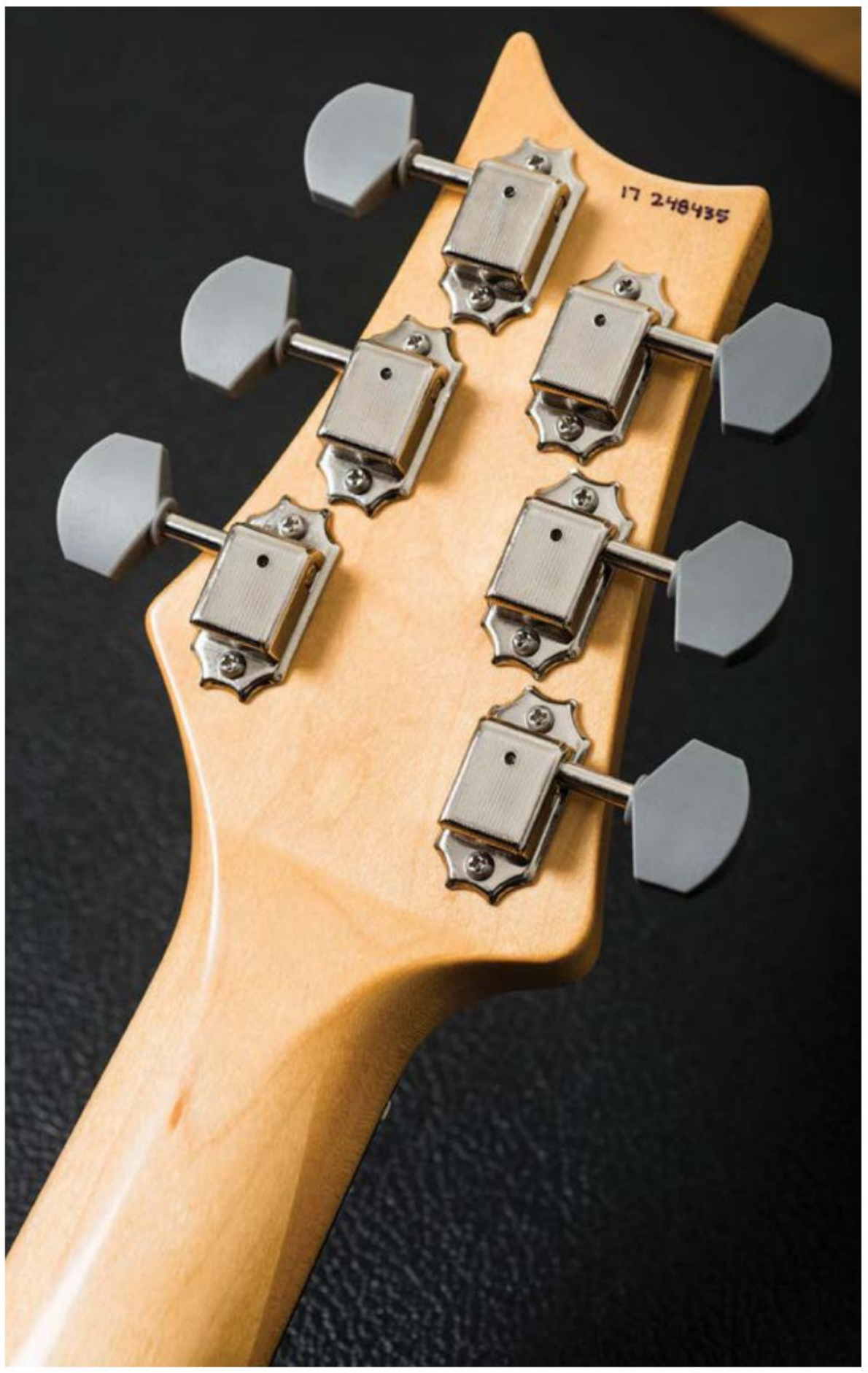

TUNER TIPS

All moving parts tend to need occasional maintenance and tuners are a prime example. Over time, they can get to feel loose and sloppy, or they may go the other way and get stiff, or even seize up. So, is it new tuner time? Not necessarily.

Let's begin with the open-geared tuners that are commonly found on acoustics, Gretsches and so forth. There are usually two screws on the gear plate that fix each tuner onto the headstock. Remove the screws to remove a tuner, and then undo the screw holding gear onto the string post. When everything is dismantled, the metal parts can be cleaned with a naphtha (lighter fluid)-soaked cotton bud. You may find a load of caked dirt and dried grease. Once clean, reassemble using petroleum jelly between all the moving parts and wipe off any excess before mounting the tuners back on the guitar. The grease tends to solidify inside the gear housings of Kluson-style tuners, too. Take the tuners off the guitar, heat them up on a radiator or blast them with a hairdryer and flush the gear housings with naphtha. You can force it in with a syringe, but with extremely stiff or seized tuners, you may need to soak them in the naphtha for some time.

If there are plastic buttons, try and keep them out of the naphtha. Once the tuners are turning freely, flush out any remaining grease, allow the naphtha to evaporate, then use a syringe to inject petroleum jelly into the housing and wipe off any excess.

Even if your tuners are working fine, it's a sensible precaution to check the tightness of the fixing screws periodically. Tuners can sometimes get a bit rattly, too, so check the tightness of the bushing nuts if your tuners have them. Sealed tuner buttons are always held onto the gear shafts by screws, and they can work loose. If there's any play in the buttons, tighten the screws – but don't over tighten, because the tuners will stiffen up and be hard to turn.

TUNERS CAN START TO FEEL LOOSE, THEY MAY GET STIFF, OR EVEN SEIZE UP. SO, IS IT NEW TUNER TIME? NOT NECESSARILY

If your open-gear tuners are too stiff or too loose, you'll need to clean out all the dirt and grease using naphtha, then lubricate them with petroluem jelly. If you have sealed-gear tuners, you can tweak the tightness of the buttons themselves using the screws on the gear shafts

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COMMON NUT ISSUES

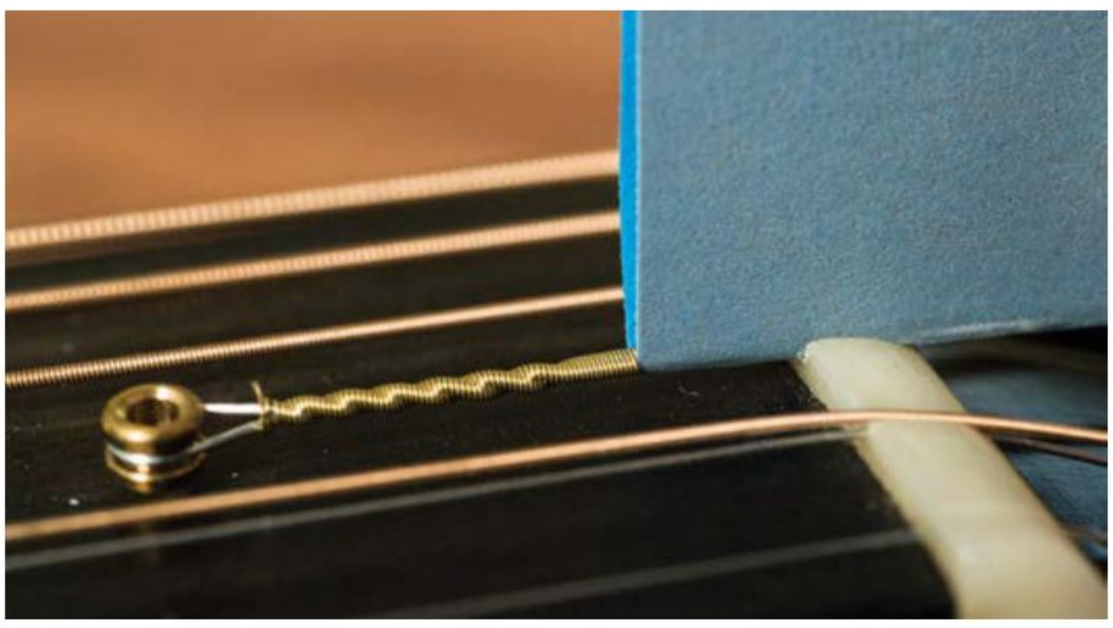
Unless you're buying a reasonably high-end guitar, most guitars are shipped with nuts that have relatively shallow string slots. Cutting nut slots to a perfect depth takes time, which isn't conducive to mass-producing guitars. Cutting them just deep enough so the guitar plays, but high enough to prevent the open strings buzzing against the 1st fret, ensures that there will be no rejects. The problem here is that high nut slots tend to make open chords sound out of tune. An E major chord may sound fine, but a D major doesn't. Tune the G string so the D major sounds sweet, and your E major will suffer. High nut slots also make the guitar harder to play. Try putting a capo on the 1st fret, make sure all the open strings are in tune – a semitone up – and try those open chords again. If your guitar plays easier and sounds more in tune, the nut slots probably need attention and getting a luthier to do it is probably cheaper than buying a set of nut files.

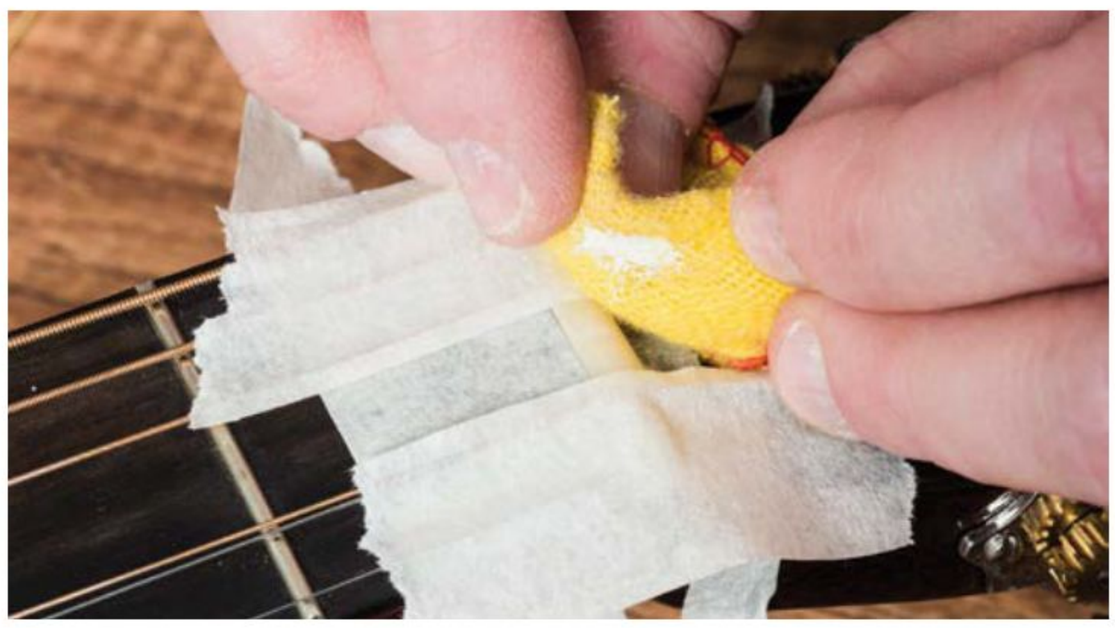
ITALIAN TUNING TUNE-UP

Tuning instability is another issue associated with hastily cut nut slots. All too often, the tuners are blamed and replaced unnecessarily, but if you hear pops, clicks and pings when you're tuning up or bending strings, you can conclude that the strings are binding in their slots. Try wrapping some 1000-grit abrasive paper around a string and using it to smooth the slot. With materials such as bone, you can make the slots smoother still using chrome polish. Lubricating the slots with Tune-It, Nut Sauce, graphite powder or even petroleum jelly can also ensure your strings will glide easily.

What can be done about slots that are too low? In the long term, you may need to have the nut replaced, but there are workarounds that will get you through the next few gigs – and may even become permanent.

Bone nut slots can be packed with baking soda, then a drop of water-thin Super Glue is allowed to wick into the powder and set solid – preferably overnight. You can use bone dust, too, but the slot will have to be recut with a needle file or the appropriate string wrapped with abrasive paper. If the slot was only marginally too low to begin with, add just a little powder rather than pack the slot to the brim. Plastic and nylon nuts may not be such an easy fix, but if you're in a hurry, tiny pieces of paper can be pressed into the offending slots to raise the strings. It may not look pretty, but it does the job. If a few of the slots are too low, it may be easiest to shim the nut. Be warned that the nut and the finish can be damaged in the process of removing a nut, but find an online tutorial video and decide for yourself. A single layer of 0.6mm veneer placed into the nut slot, before the nut goes back in, should be sufficient.





If your nut slots aren't cut properly, tuning issues can often follow – to get things moving smoothly again you can use sandpaper to tidy up a slot, or alternatively lubricate it using chrome polish, Nut Sauce or other bespoke solutions

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LOOSE VIBRATO ARMS

Whether it's a Strat-style 'synchronised tremolo', a Bigsby or a Floyd Rose, the thing about vibrato arms is that you want them to be where you expect them to be. The big dive-bomb moment has come, you hit a perfect harmonic and find yourself grasping at thin air because the arm has swung all the way down. Modern vibrato assemblies often have grub screws that can be set to achieve the preferred balance between solidity and swingability. Once you've found where the screw is, you can set-and-forget. However, vintage-style Strat vibratos can be more problematic, because they can become loose in the block. As well as refusing to stay put, there can be excessive play within the arm hole that makes the vibrato system loose and unresponsive.

Some people advocate dropping a spring into the block that will compress against the arm as it's tightened and hold it firm. We've found that wrapping the arm's threaded section with PTFE tape from a plumbing-supply shop does the job just as well. The tape may need changing from time to time, but it's dirt cheap. Bigsby arms are held in position by a spring pushing against a couple of nuts. The amount of compression on the spring affects the arm's swingability, and you can adjust this by loosening the outer nut, repositioning the inner one and retightening the outer one. Once you have the feel you want, apply a drop of Super Glue between the nuts and they'll hold tight.

THE THING ABOUT VIBRATO ARMS IS THAT YOU WANT THEM TO BE WHERE YOU EXPECT THEM TO BE

Fixing a loose vibrato arm can be as simple as tightening a nut or dropping in some thread-seal tape

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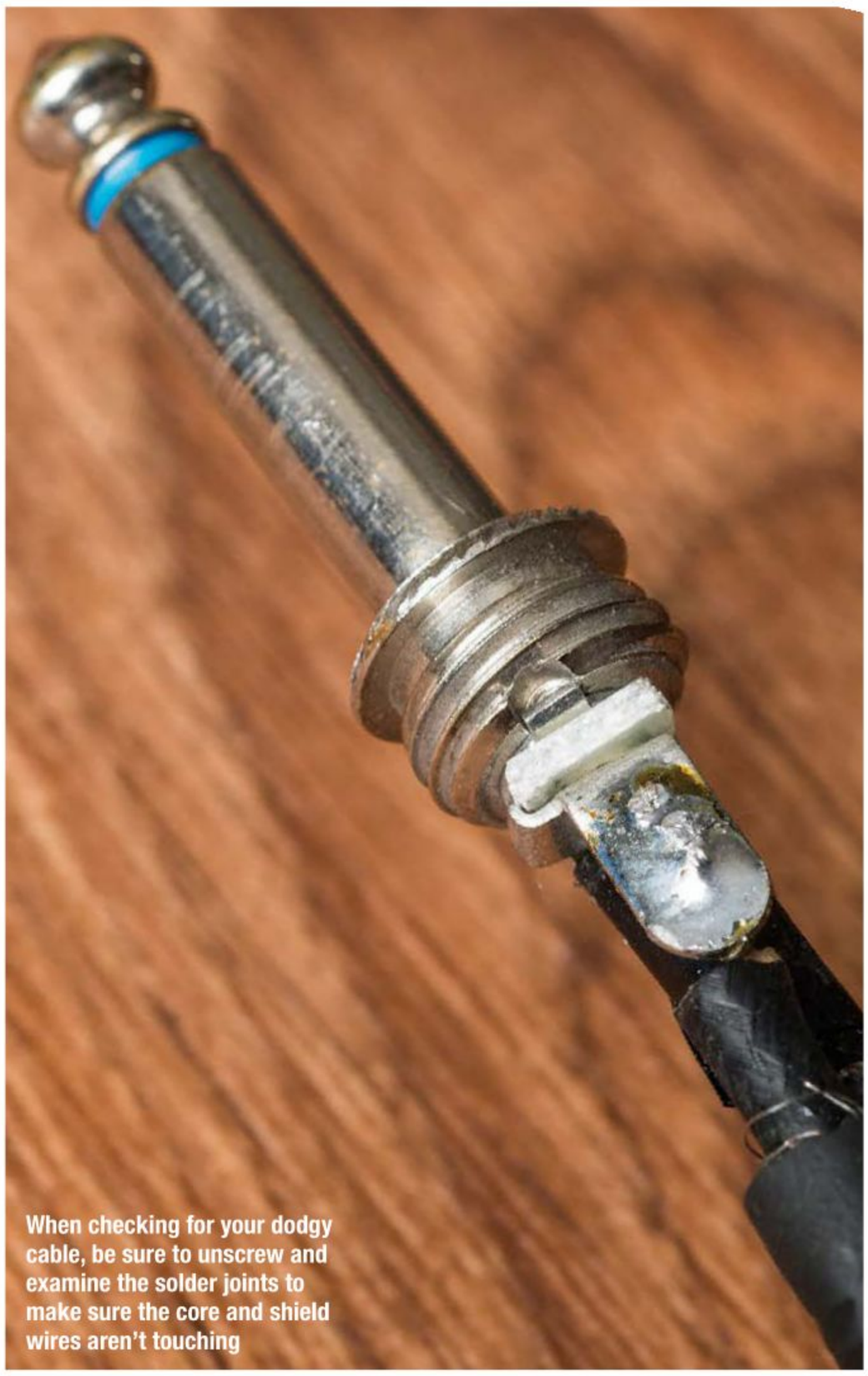
CABLE WOES

It's probably happened to all of us at some point. Everything was fine earlier, but when you flick the standby switch, there's the sound of silence. Panic may seem appropriate, but staying calm and trying to trace the problem logically is more likely to get the show back on the road. Assuming the amp is okay and your guitar volume is turned up (yes, really), the most likely scenario is a communication breakdown somewhere between your guitar and amp. Invariably, problems of this nature can be traced to a dodgy cable.

Try pulling your guitar cable from the pedalboard and plugging directly into the amp. If it works, do the same with the cable running from the pedalboard to your amp. If both are working, it's probably one of the patch cables on your board. Established sound-engineering practice is to work backwards through the signal path until you find the issue. In this case, that means pulling the patch cable from the output of the penultimate pedal in the chain and touching the tip with your fingertip. If you get noise through your amp, plug the patch cable back in and move onto the next one. Repeat until you don't get any noise, and you've found the dodgy patch.

You can also test cables electronically. If you own a multimeter, set it to continuity and touch the test probes to both tips of the jacks. If the connection is good, the meter will buzz. Do the same with the sleeve sections of the plugs. If that also tests 'good', but the cable still doesn't work, try the test again with one probe on a tip and the other on a sleeve. If you get the continuity buzz this time, it means the cable has shorted out. Unscrew the jack plugs and examine the solder joints to check that the core and shield wires aren't touching. If the plugs look okay, the short is probably somewhere within the cable and you need a new one.

You can also perform rudimentary cable tests using a speaker cabinet and a nine-volt battery pulled from a pedal. Plug the suspect cable into the cab and touch the positive and negative battery terminals against the tip and sleeve of the cable's unused jack plug. If the cable is working properly, you should hear a momentary thump coming from the speakers.



When checking for your dodgy cable, be sure to unscrew and examine the solder joints to make sure the core and shield wires aren't touching

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STORAGE AND TRANSPORT

Hang them, case them, stand them or bag them... which option is best for keeping your guitar safe? Some years ago, I interviewed Dave Edmunds, who explained one of the reasons he sold off his guitar collection to me: owning over 30 vintage guitars, he had to keep them in cases. Every time he felt like playing one, it had to be pulled out of storage, cleaned and set up with fresh strings, because they always went dead in the case. By the time the guitar was in a playable condition, Edmunds had usually lost interest and the guitar was put back into hibernation. Few players own 30 guitars, let alone vintage ones, but many of us believe we're doing the right thing by keeping our guitars in cases. Unfortunately, this practice can do more harm than good. Besides the accelerated corrosion that invariably dulls the strings, frets and hardware, there's the issue of aging celluloid plastic.

Over time, the plastic emits vapours that eat into metal plating and can damage the finish. Vintage Gretsches are particularly notorious for 'binding rot', but in our experience, the celluloid binding survives just fine if the guitar is kept on a stand or hung on a wall. Another advantage of hanging your guitars, or keeping them on stands, is that you can just grab one whenever the mood takes you. A wall of guitars also looks pretty cool, and they'll never smell musty or mouldy.

KEEPING OUR GUITARS IN CASES CAN UNFORTUNATELY DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD TO OUR GUITARS

Some acoustic aficionados take a slightly different view, arguing that keeping all-solid guitars in sealed cases with controlled humidity prevents wood shrinkage and cracking. Maintaining constant humidity also ensures consistent tone and there are countless humidifiers on the market from manufacturers such as Martin, Planet Waves, D'Addario and Oasis.

LEFT OUT IN THE RAIN

Keeping guitars in good condition at home is one thing, but making sure they're safe and secure when you're out gigging and touring is something else entirely.

Keeping your guitar safe is paramount and irrespective of how great some vintage guitars may be, the same cannot be said for all vintage cases. The only thing an 'alligator case' will protect a vintage Les Paul Junior from is the rain – and that's debatable. Even Joe Bonamassa isn't carting 'The Snakebite' around the world in a 'Cali Girl' case. Although 70s and 80s Gibsons may be unloved, the Gibson 'Protector' cases of that era are regarded as the best ever, and that's what Joe tends to use. If you travel to gigs by car and carry your own stuff, strong modern cases are your best bet. But if your gear is going into vehicles and planes alongside heavy objects like amps, cabinets and drummers, a proper flightcase is indispensable.

Keeping your vintage electric guitar in its case might not be the best thing for its hardware and finish, while you'll want something more robust than a vintage wooden hard case if you're planning to gig it

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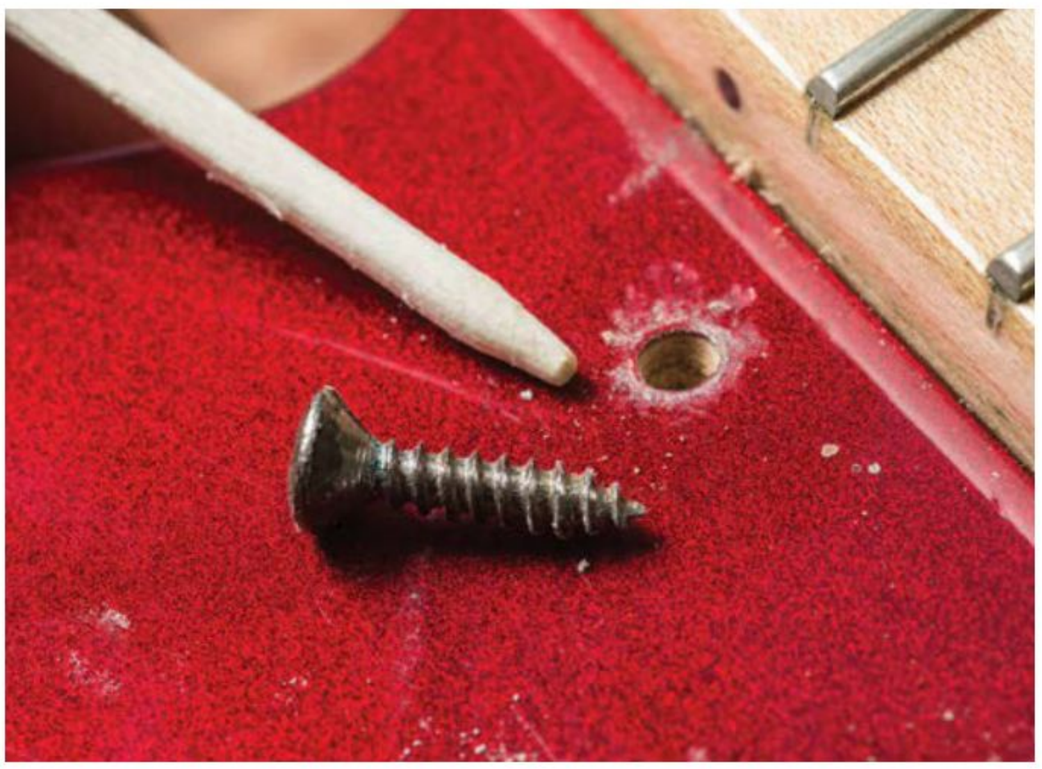
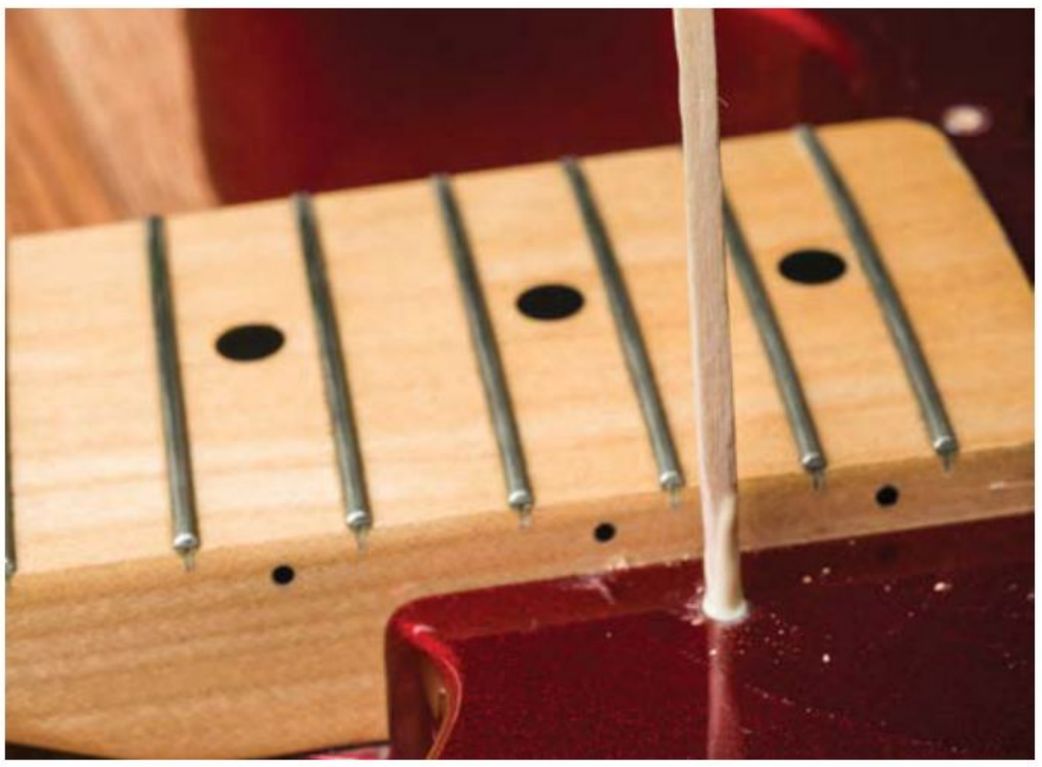




BRIGHTER BUTTONS

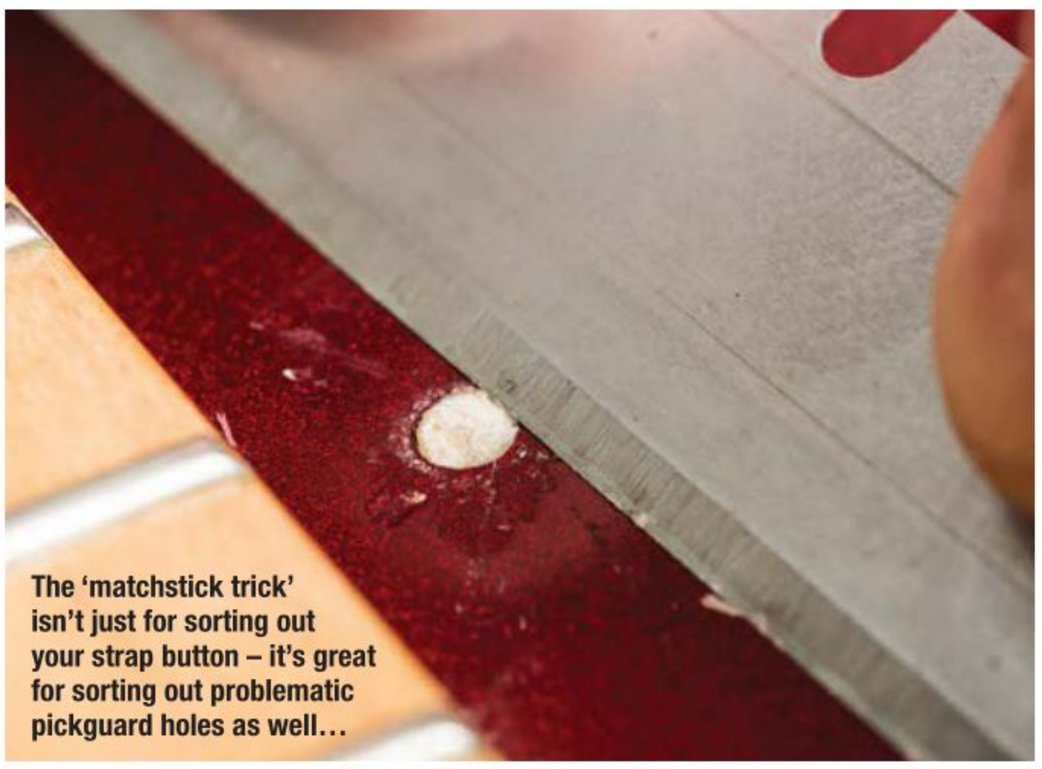
Two issues tend to occur with strap buttons – straps falling off the buttons, and buttons falling off the guitar.

The results can be catastrophic as well as comedic, but there are various ways to ensure that your guitars hang tight. If you prefer the look of vintage-style buttons but want to reduce the risk, many guitarists have successfully used the rubber washers from the stopper tops of Grolsch beer bottles. The strap goes on first, the rubber washer goes over the top and the problem is solved. It's an expensive way to do it and you end up with pink parts on your guitar, but at least you can enjoy the beer. Alternatively, you can buy black rubber-lock strap-lock washers on eBay, which cost less than £2 for a pack of 10.

Consider moulded plastic strap locks that slip over vintage-style strap buttons – such as the Jim Dunlop Ergo. Perhaps the safest option is to go for full-on locking strap buttons, but that will mean taking off the old buttons to fit the new ones. Since they're only held on with screws, if you can operate a screwdriver you can do the job yourself. The trickier issue is how to prevent strap buttons from pulling out if the screw is loose in the body. You might consider drilling out the hole, filling it with wood glue and tapping in a dowel. Once the glue is set, you can drill a new pilot hole and so long as the diameter of the dowel is less than that of the strap button, the repair will be invisible.

YOU CAN PACK THE LOOSE SCREW HOLE WITH WOODEN MATCHSTICKS AND A GENEROUS SQUIRT OF WOOD GLUE

Alternatively you can pack the loose screw hole with wooden matchsticks, toothpicks or cocktail sticks and a generous squirt of wood glue. Again, you'll need to drill a new pilot hole for the button screw, but the fix should be permanent. You might also try using longer screws than can bite into fresh wood, but ensure the diameter is suitable for the button.



The 'matchstick trick' isn't just for sorting out your strap button – it's great for sorting out problematic pickguard holes as well…

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ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

Some guitar players struggle to differentiate between lovely vintage patina and plain old dirt and refuse ever to clean their guitars. It's a personal thing, but we feel guitars that are regularly cleaned and maintained tend to operate more reliably.

Get into the habit of wiping down your strings with a clean cloth or some proprietary string cleaner after jamming or gigging. These products are cheap, quick and easy to use – and by removing sweat, grease and dirt from your strings, they may last longer and that will save you money. Two or three times a year, try cleaning your fingerboard during a routine string change. Naphtha is ideal and you can apply lemon oil or fretboard conditioner to ebony and rosewood 'boards to keep them looking and feeling good. Try polishing the frets, too, with some Micro-Mesh or Crimson Guitars' Fret Rubbers. Smooth and shiny frets make string bends feel easier.

Grease and grime can also get into the finish on the back of the neck, making it feel slow and sticky. Again, naphtha can help to an extent, but the most effective product we have tried is Virtuoso Premium Cleaner. It miraculously lifts out all the gunk while leaving the finish unscathed, and it's suitable for vintage guitars. A quick check of all the screws and fixings is also worthwhile to ensure strap buttons, tuners and pickguards are all properly fastened. While you're at it, apply guitar lube where needed – in nut slots, under string trees and on the pivot points of vibrato bridges. Lastly, run an electronics test to establish that everything is working properly. Prevention is always better than a cure, and regular maintenance allows you to enjoy your guitars more – and may save you money.

When changing your strings, give the fingerboard a proper clean two or three times a year – rosewood 'boards respond well to lemon oil

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WIN A Keeley Caverns V2 delay/reverb pedal

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Robert Keeley is one of the leading lights of the boutique effects scene – his sublime creations have been gracing the pedalboards of rock stars and tonehounds for more than 15 years now. And thanks to Keeley Electronics, one lucky reader will join that discerning club by winning a Caverns V2 delay/reverb pedal.

The original Caverns appeared a few years back, as an answer to the prayers of space-concious guitar players who couldn't fit both a delay and reverb onto their 'boards. The Caverns solved that problem by not making you choose – putting both effects in a single box, and offering you full independent control of each.

It was an idea that went down well with fans of all things ambient, but Keeley thought there was room for improvement. Last year V2 arrived, complete with a wider case to fit in eight full-sized knobs and a new three-way switch to control delay modulation. There are also internal tweaks – the plate reverb has switched to spring, joining the existing shimmer and modulated options, the delay time is now at a usable 650ms, and you even get the option to select true or buffered bypass for every effect – complete with those all-important trails.

With lashings of authentic tape-style delay on tap one side, and towering reverb on the other – with the ability to blend them to your taste – it's no wonder we said that the Caverns was, "Delay and reverb working together in perfect harmony". For more information about Keeley Electronics pedals visit **robertkeeley.com**, and to be in with a chance of winning a Caverns yourself, simply answer the question below at the following link:

theguitarmagazine.com/comps/caverns

Q In what US state is the Keeley Electronics headquarters located?

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LOST HIGHWAY

Is this the coolest guitar collection in the world? 40,000 Instagram users can't be wrong. Chris Vinnicombe meets Robert Hart, aka Lost In Crystal Canyons...

Photography ROBERT HART

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PRIVATE COLLECTION

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Scrolling through the relentless parade of pictures on your Instagram feed has become one of the easiest ways to kill time, especially if you're a guitarist. The supply of interesting gear to gawk at and lust after is seemingly endless, and for some gear companies it has become the most important place to market their wares. It's also a fantastic place to discover new musicians.

Amidst the all of the noise, however, some accounts stand out because they bring a high-end artistic sensibility to the table that goes way beyond a quick mobile phone snap with a grainy vintage filter applied to it – Lost In Crystal Canyons is undoubtedly one of those. Named after a lyric from the song *Thrasher* – one of Neil Young's most vivid slices of acoustic balladry – the account is run by the affable Robert Hart: a unabashed guitar fanatic from New Zealand whose Shadowlands (www.shadowlands.co) photography studio is situated in the historic Auckland suburb of Eden Terrace.

Hart's guitar collection is a mixture of classic designs, modern boutique instruments and pawn shop curios, with a common thread: everything

"COLLECTING IS IN MY BLOOD; MY FATHER'S A COLLECTOR OF ALL THINGS NAUTICAL. IT'S THE THRILL OF THE HUNT THAT CAN GET ADDICTIVE"

Previous pages **Mid-60s Gretsch 6120 and 6122**

Opposite page **"These are mid-60s Maton Fyrbyrds. The one without the shark-bite was an export model made for New Zealand, featuring the NZ-made Milton vibrato"**

Above left **"Two Hummingbirds made by Tokai in the 60s – the brown one has a built-in fuzz"**

Above top right **A Gretsch Custom Shop Penguin, Master Built by Stephen Stern**

Above bottom right **A 2005 Les Paul Faded that came to Robert "destroyed" so he brought it back from the grave**

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Opposite **Three vintage Matons (l-r): a DC1500, EG75 Goldline & Supreme 777**

Above left **New Zealand-made Jansen Phantom and Jazzman from the mid-1960s. The pedal is a Jansen Fuzzman**

Above right **"The red 335 is from the early 1990s. The other one the late 70s. I added the Bigsby and the pickups are Tru-Clone PAFs, they are amazing"**

is cool as hell. Robert was kind enough to shoot some choice guitars from his envious treasure trove especially for *The Guitar Magazine* and – as is often the case on his Instagram account – they are surrounded by an artful selection of gear, clothing and vintage ephemera.

VIEW FINDER

The man certainly knows how to dress a scene, but how did his love affair with guitars catch fire? "My first guitar was a black Epiphone S-type I bought when I was 14 years old," Robert recalls. "But my true love for guitars developed in 1996 with a Fender Jag-Stang in a world of fuzz-infused grunge. Collecting is in my blood; my father is an avid collector of all things nautical. Whatever it is you choose to collect, it's the thrill of the hunt that can get addictive."

The spoils of that hunt very often find their way onto Instagram and perhaps inevitably, there's a common thread running through Hart's day job and the way he chooses to display his wonderful trophies. "Each shoot at my photography studio, Shadowlands, is an exercise in styling," he says. "Which I guess develops a refined eye and strong

"JANSEN, COMMODORE AND MATON WERE PIONEERING THEIR OWN TECHNIQUES, WHICH PRODUCED INTERESTING TAKES ON THE CLASSICS"

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Above top left **"The toilet-shaped thing has a faux-wood top. Based on the inlays I think it was made in Japan in the 60s by Norma Guitars"**

Above bottom left **A stock Gibson SG from around 1968**

Above right **"The Frank Brothers Arcade has a MojoAxe tailpiece, Seymour Duncan Joe Bonamassa Amos PAFs, aged Grovers and a Bumble Bee harness from 59 Parts. Amazing!"**

understanding of light, which has flowed over into my personal work.

"By day I shoot everything from fashion to jewellery to beer bottles, so when I come home to unwind in my own space, the work takes on my personal aesthetic naturally. The continuity of Lost In Crystal Canyons is a result of the things I have collected over the years and surround myself with. I'm a hunter-gatherer, and the things that I connect with always have a history, which is why there is a sense of nostalgia in my photos."

SOUTHERN ROCK

While many of the guitars pictured across these pages are classic designs with which we are all familiar, some of the most rare and unusual instruments in Hart's collection originate from the Southern Hemisphere, and it's a topic that he is clearly very passionate about.

"During the late 50s boom of rock 'n' roll, New Zealand had stringent import laws," he reveals. "This created an isolated industry of our own down here. Brands such as Jansen, Commodore and Maton were pioneering their own techniques,

"I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE AMAZING TO GET FRANK BROTHERS TO DO A CUSTOM BUILD. THEIR SHAPE IS MODERN YET INTRINSICALLY CLASSIC"

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1970 Fender Stratocaster Blonde
1973 Fender Stratocaster LPB
1950 Fender Broadcaster

1956 Fender Telecaster
1956 Fender Telecaster body refin
1965 Fender Custom Telecaster Firemist Gold..!
1967 Fender Telecaster Blonde near MINT
1968 Fender Custom Telecaster s/b
1968 Fender Telecaster Thinline

1959 Fender Jazzmaster Blonde
1960 Fender Jazzmaster s/b
1963 Fender Jaguar Blonde Gold
1964 Fender Jaguar Olympic White

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1954 Gibson Les Paul Goldtop
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1956 Gibson Les Paul Custom
1956 Gibson Les Paul TV Junior
1959 Gibson Les Paul Junior
1959 Gibson Les Paul Junior 3/4
1961 Gibson Les Paul SG PAF's
1963 Gibson Les Paul SG
1964 Gibson Firebird VII
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"I'M A HUNTER-GATHERER, AND THE THINGS I CONNECT WITH ALWAYS HAVE A HISTORY, IT'S WHY THERE IS A SENSE OF NOSTALGIA IN MY PHOTOS"

which produced some very interesting takes on the classics. I have a number of beautiful Australasian pieces in the collection, which I will be featuring in my upcoming book, through which I hope to capture a piece of history before it's lost."

Another model that catches our eye is from much further afield, however – and it also happens to be Hart's latest addition to the fold. His Frank Brothers Arcade would be handsome enough in its own right,

Opposite **Three of Robert's Les Pauls (bottom to top): another 2005 Faded, a mid-2000s Goldtop with Mojo P-90 Gold Foil in the bridge, and mid-90s Plaintop with Tru-Clone PAFs and harness**

Above **"These two are custom builds by Kauer in Shoreline Gold – left is a Banshee with TV Jones pickups and the other is a Super Chief with two Mojo Dual Foils"**

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"DURING THE LATE 50S BOOM OF ROCK 'N' ROLL, NEW ZEALAND HAD STRINGENT IMPORT LAWS, THIS CREATED AN ISOLATED INDUSTRY OF OUR OWN"

but Hart's model has been furnished with some custom features by the boutique Toronto firm.

"I've always been a fan of boutique builders," says Hart. "And I thought it would be amazing to get Frank Brothers to do a custom build. Their shape is incredibly modern yet intrinsically classic – pairing that with a 50s trapezoidal tail, plus the epic tortoiseshell accents and off-white colour, ticks all my boxes. Their attention to detail is impeccable and that's something I really appreciate in this day of mass production."

PLUGGING IN

When it's time to amplify his enviable collection, Hart turns to a Marshall Bluesbreaker and a Swart with one of the North Carolina amp company's Night Light attenuators built in.

"I tend to use [the Swart] more often due to living in a loft," he remarks. "My favourite pedal at the moment is an early 70s New Zealand-made Hot Cake; it sounds amazing."

Though Hart says the Swart and his ES-330 would be his desert island rig, we wonder if there's anything that even someone with a collection as varied as this can still be lusting after? "I have a long list," he admits. "With a TK Smith Special at the top. And another Frank Brothers Malcolm Young-inspired creation. That, and I'm always on the hunt for New Zealand-made oddities."

To see more of Robert's guitars and photography visit www.instagram.com/lostincrystalcanyons or www.shadowlands.co

Above **Robert Hart at home with his custom Frank Brothers Arcade model**

Opposite (anti-clockwise) **Two vintage Supros, a NZ-made Ludwig hollowbody, a Shyboy Guitars korina Junior with Lollar Gold Foil and an early 1960s stock Harmony H75**

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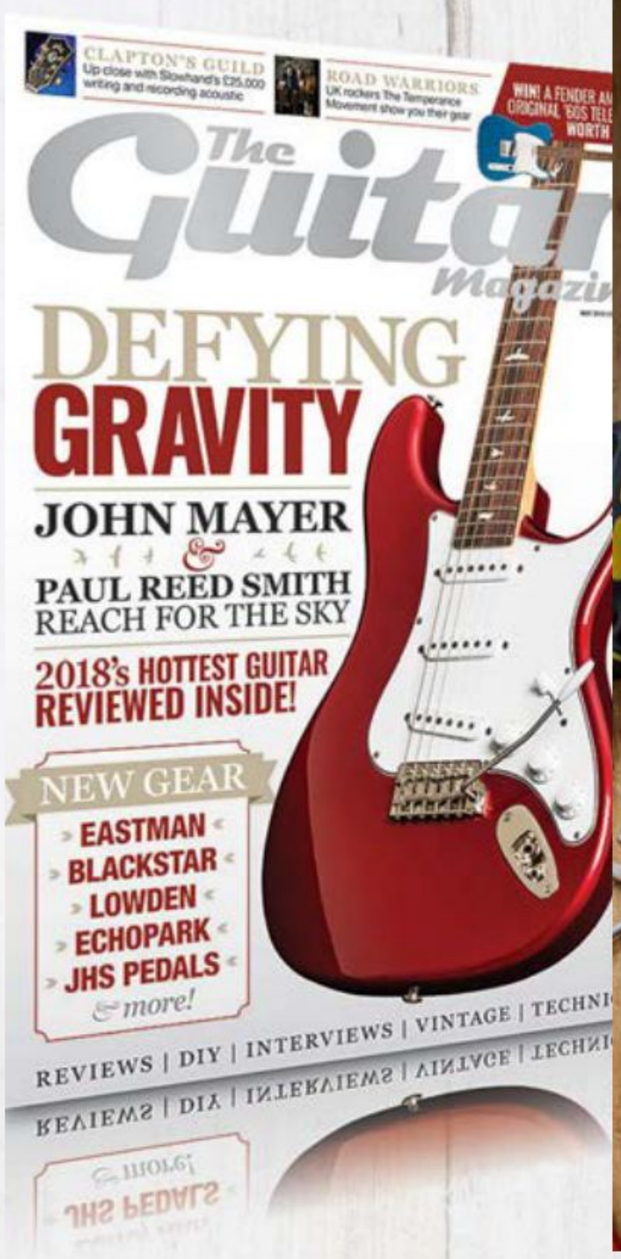

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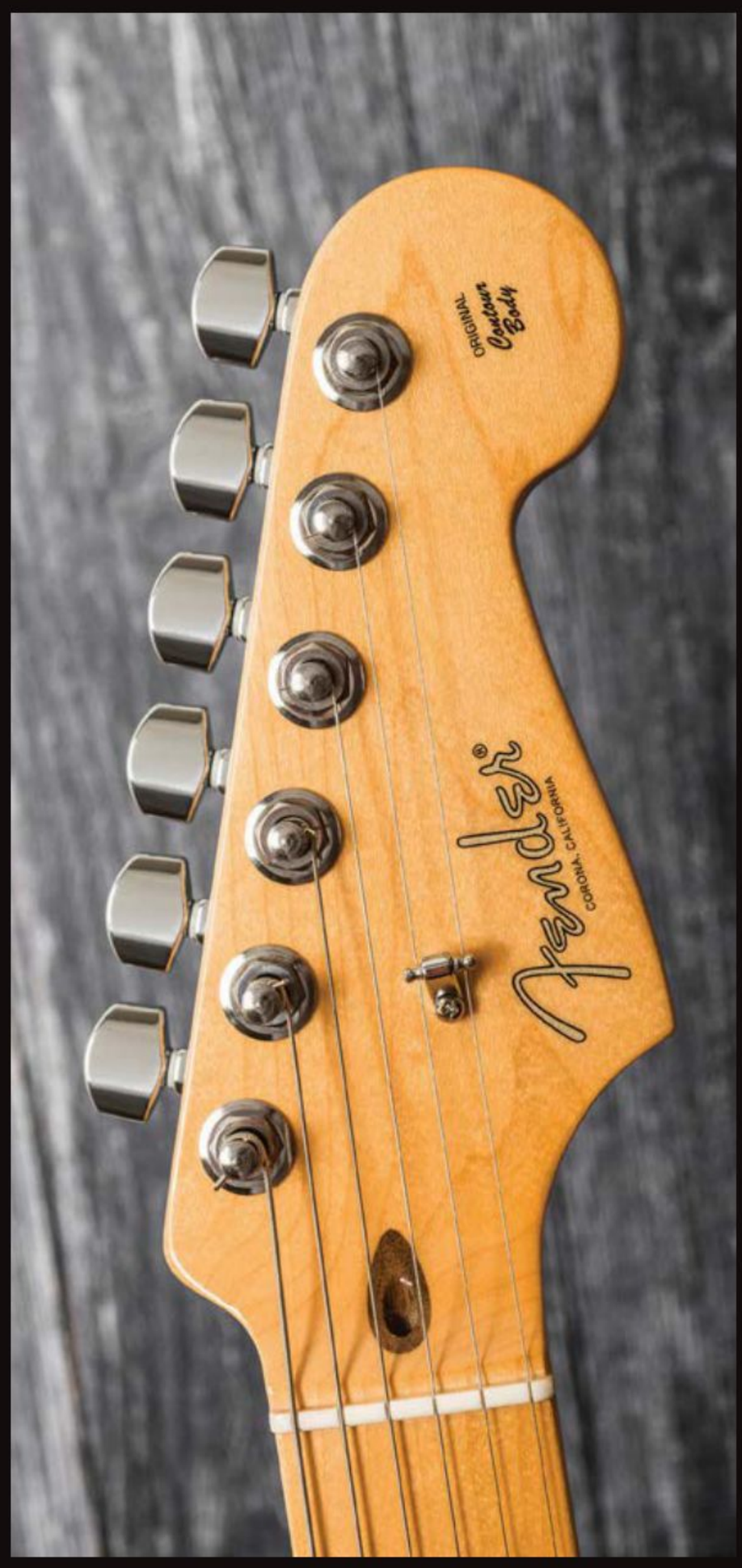

PARALLEL LINES

Meet Fender's limited edition Strat-Tele Hybrid, the first model in the company's 2018 Parallel Universe series

Launched at the Winter NAMM Show in Anaheim, California back in January, Fender's Parallel Universe series sees the company flexing its design muscles to create a range of new instruments by blurring the lines between iconic instruments of the past. The first to land on these shores is the Strat-Tele Hybrid, which takes a Telecaster outline and adds some classic Stratocaster accoutrements.

Though it was initially inspired by a limited run of similar models produced by Senior Master Builder and Custom Shop Director Chris Fleming back in 2006, as a production model it's something new. "We wanted to do something fresh and different, something exciting and interesting to consumers that wasn't just a typical Strat or Tele," said Fender's Senior Product Development Manager of Electric Guitars and Basses, Allen Abbassi. "We've mixed and matched different models in the past, and this is still very much in Fender's wheelhouse."

When it comes to spec, the trio of Custom Shop '69 Aged Strat pickups, nitrocellulose paintjob and comfort contours carved into the traditional Tele slab make this a Tele-shaped guitar that any vintage Strat fan can get along with. "There are Strat people and Tele people, and we wanted to give a Tele guy a Strat," said Fender's Vice President of Fender Electric Guitars and Basses Product Development, Joey Brasler. "Some people just aren't comfortable on a Stratocaster, so this is an opportunity to expand their palette."

The Strat-Tele Hybrid is available now for £1,609 street. Visit www.fender.com for more on the Parallel Universe series.

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SIGNATURE SOUNDS

Though not as famous as the guitar that bore his name, in the 1950s Les Paul also lent his name to a line of Gibson amps that made a complete signature 'guitar outfit'. Huw Price gets two-toned with the GA-40…

In total, Gibson produced no fewer than five Les Paul GA-40 amplifier variants. The looks and electronics varied from model to model, yet none produced anything like the 40 watts the name implies. All besides the last version were equipped with two 6V6 power valves, cathode-biased to drive about 15 watts through an Alnico Jensen P12. This GA-40 featured is the second version, which Gibson produced in 1956 and 1957. The redwood cabinet was increased in size and while Gibson retained the two-tone look, the 'buffalo grained' Tolex was combined with a smooth, patterned Tolex that looks like a blown-up photo of someone's rug. The original P12Q speaker in our example is intact and its 'late 1955' date stamp suggests this amp is most likely a 1956 example.

A 'Les Paul Model' badge is attached under the grille cloth and above it, there would have been a metal logo. Only the numbers survive, and the missing Gibson logo is filled in with a black marker pen. The leather handle is a decent repro and the original brackets remain. We're flummoxed by the added casters, because the amp is so light, but the bottom-corner protectors look fine, in an EH-185 sort of way. Les Paul's involvement with the amp's design is undocumented, but we know that Seth Lover designed the tremolo circuit, which utilises an octal 6SQ7 triode. During the mid 1950s, manufacturers were moving from octal to nine-pin miniature valves, and it's unusual to see a mixture of both.

More unusual still are the 5879 pentodes at the front of both channels, coupled with a 12AX7 phase inverter that's configured like the earliest Fender Deluxes. Channel 1's signal path is very straight-through, but Channel 2's has a filter network to provide a distinctive voicing and if you compare its circuit with the EF86

Opposite **The Gibson badge is long gone, but the outline has been drawn in black marker**

Above **The control panel and has suffered corrosion, and a screw has been added at each end of the control cutout to hold the amp more securely**

Main image **The black metal valve is an RCA 6SQ7 octal triode used for the tremolo**

Above top **A new power supply filter capacitor has been installed inside this original cardboard tube**

Above bottom **Most of the original resistors tested within spec so they were left unchanged when the amp was restored**

channel of a Vox AC10 or AC15, the extreme similarity between these amps may surprise you. Cosmetically, this amp is in fair condition and although the 'buffalo' texture has almost worn smooth, the Tolex is in decent shape. The control panel and legending have suffered corrosion, and a screw has been added at each end of the control cutout to hold the amp more securely with added Tolex patches. The wedge-shaped solid mahogany

COMPARE ITS CIRCUIT TO A VOX AC15, AND THE SIMILARITY MAY SURPRISE YOU

tremolo footswitch slots into a neat metal bracket mounted inside the cabinet. We'd like to imagine Gibson made them from neck offcuts, and the angle does look about right...

IN USE

Kicking off with our Goldtop conversion loaded with a set of 1953 P-90s, the differences between the two

KEY FEATURES

1956 Gibson GA-40

- **DESCRIPTION** Solidbody electric guitar. Made in USA
- **DESCRIPTION** 15W cathode biased combo amplifier. Made in the USA
- **PRICE** £1000
- **BUILD** 2 channel, hand-wired valve combo with tremolo
- **POWER RATING** 4W
- **VALVES** 2x 5879, 2x 6V6, 1x 5Y3
- **CONTROL PANEL** 4x input jacks, volume, volume, frequency, depth, treble/bass, power switch
- **SPEAKER** 1x Jensen P12Q 8-ohm
- **DIMENSIONS** 560 x 500 x 265mm
- **WEIGHT** 32.84/14.9kg
- **CONTACT** For serious enquiries contact *The Guitar Magazine*

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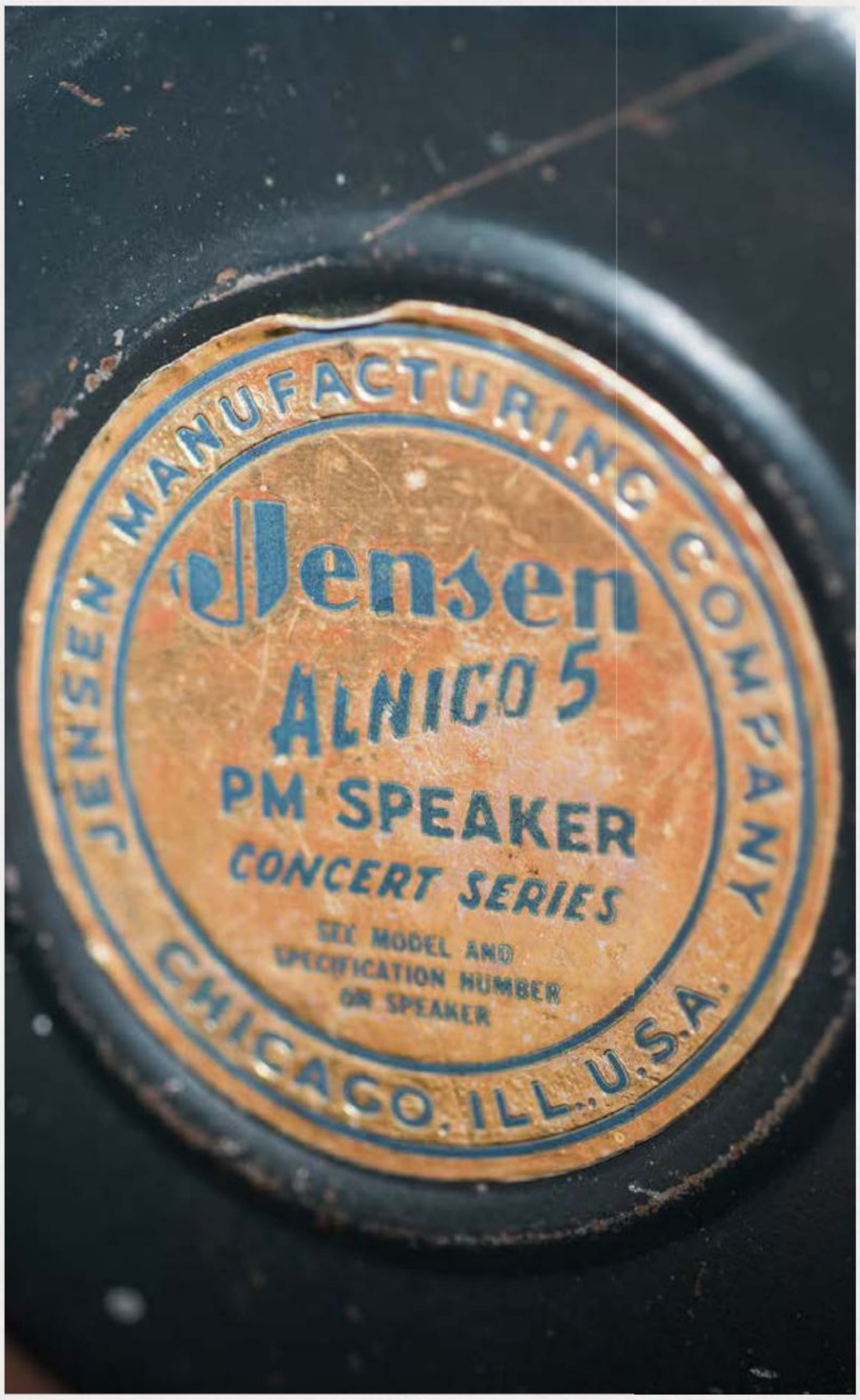


channels are immediately apparent. Channel 1 is fatter, deeper and more gainy. In contrast, Channel 2 has rolled off bass, a hint of cocked wah in the mids and a sense of extra brightness and jangle without actually sounding clearer. Putting it very simply, it's like having a Vox front end driving an early 50s Tweed phase inverter and power stage through a classic American speaker. It's two-toned in both looks and sound, then.

Since the tone control comes after the phase inverter, it has negligible effect on gain and a fairly subtle effect on treble content. The GA-40 isn't that bright to start with, but roll the tone fully back and it's not too dark, either. Bear in mind the GA-40 was designed for jazz players, and the warm and woody 'dark sparkle' associated with these amps allows any guitar's natural tone to come through without any harshness. There's a sudden jump in volume on both channels once the controls reach about a third of the way up and you can balance the channels on their sweet spots, where playing dynamics determine the drive. The GA-40 then eases its way from jump-blues honk into copious quantities of overdrive.

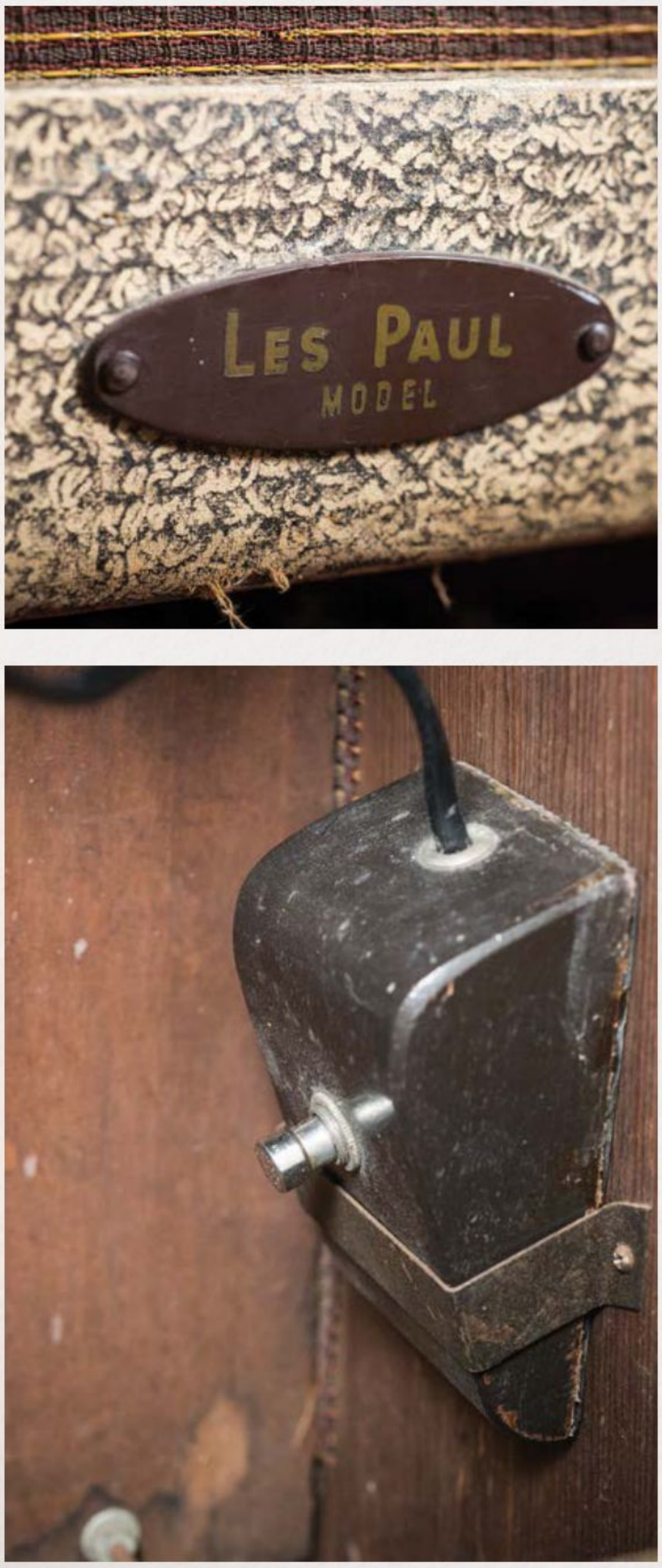
It's a harmonically rich, smooth and frankly gorgeous distortion that's also devoid of rock 'n' roll crunch. While Fender's brighter and more raucous Tweed offerings were laying the sonic foundations of blues rock, psychedelia and metal, the GA-40 was a bit behind the times... but curiously ahead of its time, too. Channel 1 is reminiscent of the modern boutique tone we tend to associate with Swart amps, albeit with less treble. Factor in a mesmerisingly versatile tremolo (that is probably my all-time favourite) with the best-sounding vintage Jensen we have ever encountered, and the GA-40 is almost addictive. The lows have genuine gravitas and hold together superbly, and the compressed, papery rasp of other P12 Jensens is totally absent.

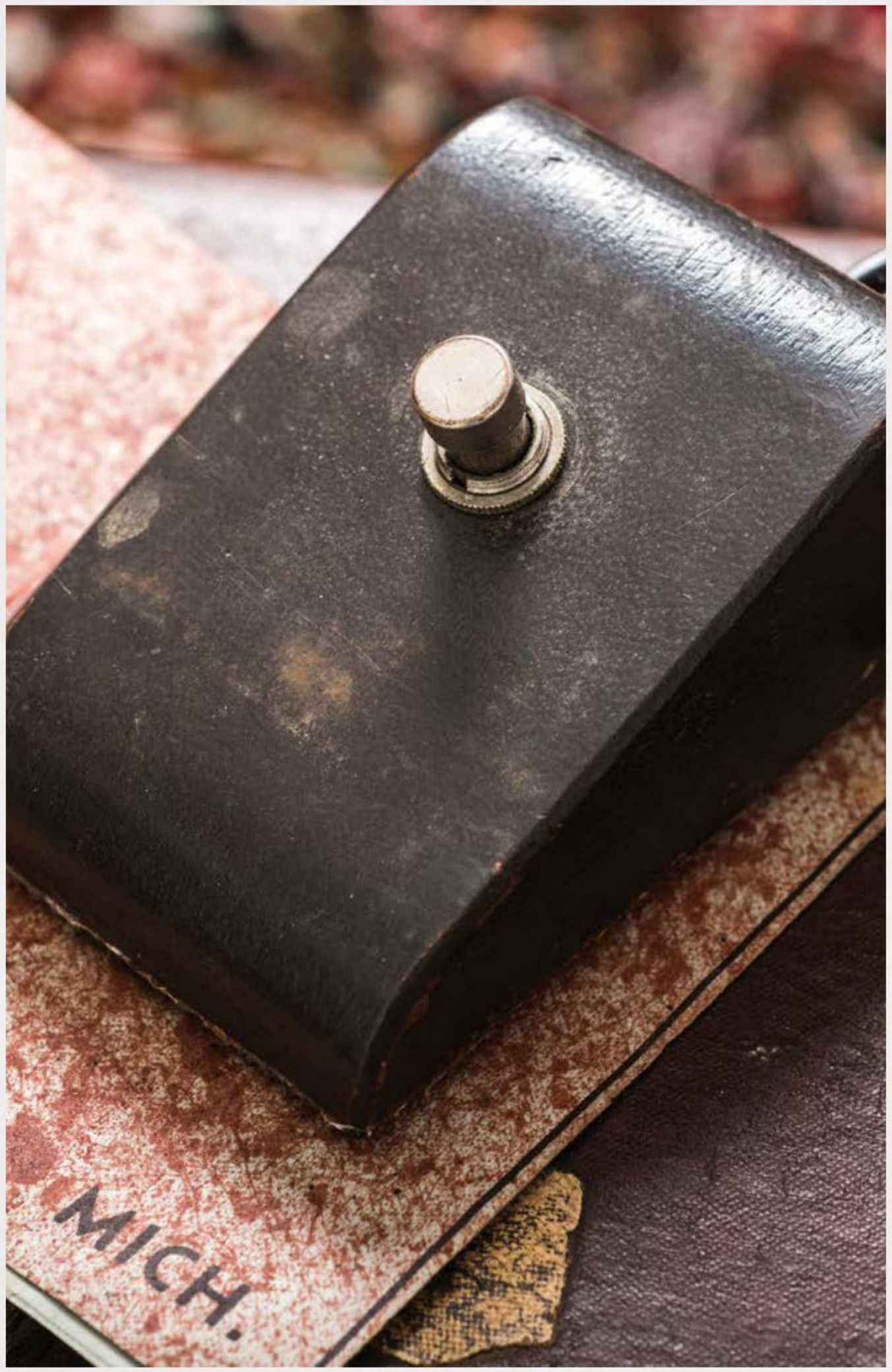
> THE 'DARK SPARKLE' ALLOWS ANY GUITAR'S NATURAL TONE TO COME THROUGH

Despite the meaty grind, choke-bolstered punch and astonishing sustain, you may struggle to cut through a mix – particularly if you combine the GA-40 with P-90s and PAFs. However, it is exactly the kind of amp

Above left **The alnico speaker is a lesser seen Jensen P12Q, which was more often used for organs than guitar amps**

Above right **A previous owner added the brown metal corner protectors and the casters**





that excels in recording scenarios and the sweet treble makes it a fatigue-free joy to play in a home setting as well. Perhaps a few minor and inexpensive tweaks could open out the top end and liven up the dynamics without altering the fundamental character. We would look at the input jack wiring – specifically the grid/mixer resistors of channel 1 and the input impedance of both channels. That's precisely what Gibson did for version three, plus there's the potential to wire bright caps across the volume controls. Although the more time we spend with this amp, the more inclined we feel to leave it stock.

The term 'Tweed killer' is indiscriminately applied to 1950s American amps that are both cheaper and more distorted. While we're always ready to champion the underdog, there are usually good reasons why Fender's finest remain the most revered. Those reasons are invariably sonic, but with the GA-40, it's less clear cut. The lack of treble extension is one thing, but the main issue is the GA-40's less-than-stellar reputation for reliability and the difficulty in fixing them. Gibson's double-sided board makes half of the components inaccessible and heat from the power valves slowly roasts filter caps to the point of failure.

IT MAY NOT BE THE PRETTIEST, BUT IT'S A FINE SPECIMEN OF A VERY SPECIAL AMP

It takes a brave person to tackle a GA40 restoration, but this amp's current owner recently completed the task with style. In the process, all the tremolo capacitors on the rear of the circuit board were replaced as a precaution and everything is running perfectly. Since it was shipped over from South Africa a few years ago, the amp has been in storage. The failed power transformer was rewound by the Majestic Transformer Company and converted to UK voltage in the process, so no step-down transformer is required. It may not be the prettiest example, but sonically and electronically, it's a fine specimen of a very special amp.

Top left **The 'Les Paul Model' badge survives at the bottom of the cabinet**

Bottom left **A metal bracket is screwed to the side of the pine cabinet' for stashing the tremolo switch**

Above left **The switch is a wedge of mahogany sprayed tobacco brown, so you could think of it as a bit of a vintage Gibson guitar**

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DAVE HUNTER
Dave Hunter is a writer and musician who has worked in the US and the UK. A former editor of this title, he is the author of numerous books including *The Guitar Amp Handbook*, *Guitar Effects Pedals*, *Amped* and *The Fender Telecaster*

Letters from *America*

SADOWSKY SEMI-HOLLOW GUITAR

Roger Sadowsky has been building unique star guitars for decades, each one imbued with a trademark dollop of New York cool. Dave Hunter checks out a semi with style...

Maybe it's in the water, but there's something about New York City that seems to breed luthiers who time and again manage to smoothly, yet rather unfeasibly, blend the qualities of old-world craftsmanship and modern workaday utilitarianism into a sort of 'boutique blue collar' ethos: they're serving real, hard-working musicians, yet are doing so with timeless artistry and style.

And no-one better embodies that than Roger Sadowsky. Having grown up in New York City amid a family that was steeped in the city's rich culture of jazz and Broadway, the young Sadowsky was first bitten by the guitar bug when he was a long way down the road toward doing something about as far from guitar-making as you can get: completing his PhD in psychobiology at Rutgers University in New Jersey. The folk boom of the late 60s was in full swing, and while Sadowsky was lured to the music performed by the many professional guitarists he got to know on the circuit, he became particularly obsessed with their gorgeous old Martins. He left his studies to begin a two-year apprenticeship building acoustic guitars with Augie LoPrinzi in New Jersey, then segued through several years of repairing and restoring guitars in Philadelphia, before returning to his native NYC.

SADOWSKY BUILT GUITARS FOR PAUL SIMON, AND SIX FOR PRINCE'S *PURPLE RAIN* TOUR IN 1984

There, he quickly forged a reputation for highly functional, and often preamp-equipped basses that served the needs of stars like Marcus Miller and Verdine White. Sadowsky soon also captured the attention of top artists whose six-string needs

Sadowsky has been building guitars and basses for New York's finest for decades

KEY FEATURES

SADOWSKY SEMI-HOLLOW

- **PRICE** $4,895 including hardshell case (approx £3,475 plus shipping and any duties)
- **BODY** Semi-hollow laminated flamed maple with chambered lightweight spruce centre block
- **NECK** Mahogany, glued-in, slim-C profile
- **FINGERBOARD** Ebony, 12" radius, 24.75" scale length
- **FRETS** 21 medium-jumbo (15 frets to the body)
- **NUT** Tusq
- **PICKUPS** Custom Sadowsky PAF-style humbuckers by DiMarzio
- **ELECTRONICS** Master tone and volume controls, three-way toggle switch
- **FINISH** Iced tea 'burst, in polyurethane
- **HARDWARE** Gotoh enclosed tuners, tune-o-matic bridge, and stopbar tailpiece
- **STRINGS** Sadowsky 0.011–0.048
- **CONTACT sadowsky.com**

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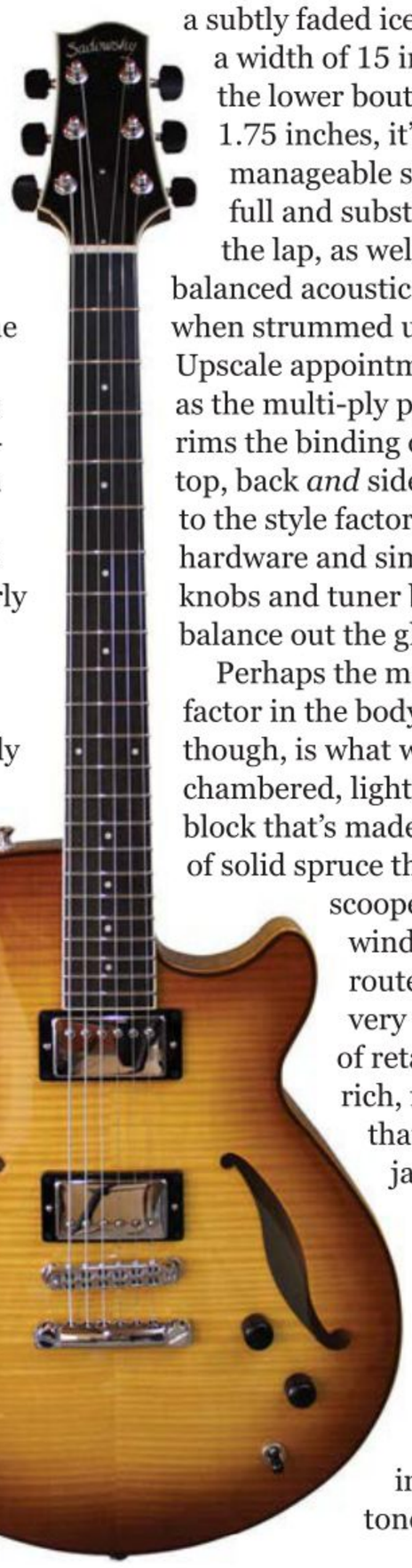
required a similar vision, building and repairing guitars for Paul Simon since 1982, building six guitars for Prince's *Purple Rain* Tour in '84, and so on. Fast-forward to 2018, and the roster of Sadowsky artists rivals that of any much larger guitar maker, including bassists and guitarists Don Was, Greg Lake, Jim Hall, Andy Summers, Dean Parks, John Abercrombie, Keith Richards, Tal Wilkenfeld, Walter Becker, Pat Metheny, Lee Ritenour and dozens of other major names.

JAZZY HOLLOW

Sadowsky's basses tend to follow the 'modified Fender J-and-P-Bass' model, but while he has also made several bolt-neck solidbody guitars, he is arguably better known for the hollow and semi-hollow archtop electrics he has supplied to so many contemporary jazz players. The model we're inspecting this issue, the Semi-Hollow, is one such guitar. A thinline, single-cutaway, semi-hollow that's in many ways more hollowbody than not, it has been designed for optimum versatility, cleverly engineered to retain the full-throated jazz tones that so many players have come to expect from Sadowsky, yet fully enabled for higher-gain rock, blues and fusion playing as well.



While the Semi-Hollow has the NYC pedigree through and through, it's one of several models manufactured by Sadowsky in Japan, a practice he began in 2003. Fully designed in New York by Roger himself – with several extremely original constructional elements that, as we shall see, take it far beyond just a 'jobbed-out chassis' – the guitars are constructed with oversight from Yoshi Kikuchi, Sadowsky's associate of 25 years, using custom US-made electronics. Each is then shipped back to Sadowsky for final fretwork and setup in NYC.

The Semi-Hollow on hand is an extremely elegant guitar, but one that manages (as per our premise, perhaps) to refrain from putting style ahead of performance. The body is made from bookmatched, five-ply flamed-maple, finished in an immaculate polyurethane gloss over a subtly faded iced tea 'burst. At a width of 15 inches across the lower bout and a depth of 1.75 inches, it's an extremely manageable size, yet has a full and substantial feel on the lap, as well as a lively, balanced acoustic response when strummed unplugged. Upscale appointments – such as the multi-ply purfling that rims the binding on the body's top, back *and* sides contribute to the style factor, while chrome hardware and simple ebony knobs and tuner buttons balance out the glam.

Perhaps the most significant factor in the body's design, though, is what we *don't* see: a chambered, lightweight centre block that's made from a piece of solid spruce that has been scooped, scalloped, windowed and routed to Sadowsky's very specific purpose of retaining the rich, full resonance that enables the jazz-approved tone of his neck pickup, while combatting unwanted feedback and aiding bite and sustain in rockier tones played on

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The attention to detail on the Semi-Hollow is plain to see all over, particularly the multi-ply purfling that rims the binding on the top, back and sides

the bridge pickup. The pickups themselves are Sadowsky's own custom-spec'd PAF-style units made by DiMarzio, wound to 8.85k ohms in the bridge and 7.43k ohms in the neck position.

The neck is solid mahogany, with a glued-in dovetail joint and a slender C profile. It wears a bound ebony fingerboard with petite dot markers, and the back-angled headstock is also faced with ebony – with multi-ply binding this time – inlaid with a mother-of-pearl Sadowsky logo. Tuners are by Gotoh, as are the ABR-1 style tune-o-matic bridge and stopbar tailpiece.

GIRTHSOME ROCKABILLY

Amped up alternately through a Fender Deluxe Reverb and a Friedman Small Box and 2x12 cab, the Semi-Hollow excels at everything you'd expect a good ES-335 to do well, yet with a little extended range in all directions. Dialled up clean through the Fender with a hint of spring reverb, the neck pickup is indeed round, rich and full, and would undoubtedly satisfy players with far deeper jazz credentials than your humble reviewer. Yet it is also bright, clear and articulate with the guitar's tone control up full, and is capable of much more than Sadowsky's stated design intentions might imply. Thick-yet-jangly pop balladry or girthsome rockabilly? Most definitely. In any mode, it delivers appealing playing dynamics, too, with just a hint of compression at the front of the note, but not so much as to squash out the attack.

Injected into the Friedman rig for more cranked-Marshall-style tones, the bridge pickup, funny enough, felt more instantly solidbody-like in many ways – given its aggressive roar and meaty lower-midrange chunk – and really doesn't shy away from anything you'd turn a good dual-humbucker solidbody towards. There's excellent bite and definition amid the crunch and sizzle, and very easy sustain, what with the way it all hangs between the combined punch and resonance of the semi-solid design and the hint of vibrational feedback that helps push it along.

Speaking of which, the Semi-Hollow only suffers unwanted feedback howl when I get silly about my proximity to the amp with the gain wound up pretty high, yet easily achieves a very controllable musical feedback that merges into my playing. Even through a fairly hot amp, it all cleaned up nicely at the guitar's volume control; more often than not, I preferred dialing out just a tad of the natural highs by rolling the guitar's tone down to about eight out of 10, although even when up full, there was no harshness in the high end. All in all, Sadowsky's Semi-Hollow is a superb and well-rounded performer, and just an easy guitar to love in many ways.

THE SEMI-HOLLOW EXCELS AT EVERYTHING YOU'D EXPECT A GOOD ES-335 TO DO WELL

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THE REVERB TOP 10

PHASE SHIFTERS

Most of us won't have a phaser on all the time, but at the right moment, their impact can be killer. Reverb's Dan Orkin counts down the 'shifters that shift the most units...

From Steve Hacket and Jimi Hendrix, to Van Halen and Johnny Greenwood, guitarists of all stripes have used modulation effects to add something different to their guitar sounds. Over the next few months we'll be turning our gaze into the varied denizens of the modulation realm, and today we're kicking off with undulating fun of phaser (or phase shifter) pedals.

For those who aren't familiar with the concept of a phase shifter, the basic recipe involves splitting an audio signal into two, filtering one of the signals through a set of all-pass filters, and then recombining them in a way that alternately cancels the phase at different points of the frequency spectrum. Most phaser pedals use a low-frequency oscillator to modulate the affected signal and vary how out-of-phase it is with the original, unaffected signal, and it's the motion of this process that gives the phaser its characteristic warbling sound.

Like many other effects, phasers came to prominence in the late 60s and can be heard on all sorts of psychedelic and funk records from the 70s and beyond. It was Eddie Van Halen, though, who probably did the most for the phase shifter as far as establishing it as a core guitar effect on the boards of all manner of modern player – hear its iconic sound at the start of *Ain't Talkin' Bout Love*.

Seen something you need to add you your board? Head to Reverb.com and pick one up for yourself!

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1 MXR M101 Phase 90
This is the standard. The Phase 90 dates back to the 1970s and set the bar for phasers. As you'll see below, there are countless variations on the design available today, but the M101 is the current manifestation of the classic design that was used by Mr Van Halen. There's not a lot to experiment with here, with a single control for speed that adjusts the rate of the movement of the phase. On lower settings, that means just a subtle swirl. On a higher rate setting, the effect gives something of a choppier, more pronounced motion to the sound of the effect.

2 MXR M290 Phase 95 Mini
Part of a wave of mini-pedals to come out over the past few years, the Phase 95 takes the classic Phase 90 template, shrinks it down a bit, and adds two different toggles to channel different periods of MXR's phasing past. For one, you can select between the standard four-stage phaser of the Phase 90 or the slightly subtle two-stage phasing of the Phase 45. The 'script' toggle refers to two different eras of vintage Phase 90 production. Engaging that button will remove some feedback from the mix, creating a somewhat mellower tone.

3 Electro-Harmonix Nano Small Stone EH4800
The current iteration of Electro-Harmonix's classic phaser option, the Nano Small Stone is essentially the EHX counterpart to the Phase 90. Like that pedal, the Small Stone has one knob for rate, but it also includes a 'color' switch that alters the character of the frequency curve a bit. It's another great, simple option primed for a variety of styles.

4 MXR EVH90 Phase 90
Honouring Van Halen's history with the Phase 90, MXR gave Eddie a signature version of the effect. Apart from the requisite red, white and black striped look of his Frankenstein guitar, this version is similar to the Phase 95 Mini in its inclusion of a 'script' toggle, which allows players to switch between the two circuits of the two vintage periods of Phase 90 production.

5 Boss PH-3
Whereas the Phase 90 and its counterparts offer a single control over rate, the Boss PH-3 opens things up a bit with controls for depth and resonance, as well as seven different stage settings that alter the number and array of the phase stages. As a digital pedal that replicates a classically analog effect, some players dismiss the glossier tone of the PH-3 in favour of that old-school analogue goodness. That said, it's hard to argue with the sheer versatility afforded by this always available and always affordable stompbox.

6 Electro-Harmonix Bad Stone
Another reborn vintage design from EHX, the Bad Stone packs in six different phase stages, compared to the standard-issue four-stage design of most analog pedals. There's also a nifty 'manual shift' and 'auto/manual' toggle that lets you lock in the tone of a particular phase setting, disengaging the oscillator that moves things back and forth.

7 EarthQuaker Devices Grand Orbiter Phase Machine
The Grand Orbiter is a shining example of EarthQuaker's knack for taking classic pedal concepts into totally unprecedented territory. This four-stage phaser allows you to tweak the blend between the wet and dry signals, and even cut the dry signal altogether for a vibrato effect. It all adds up to one of the more versatile analogue phasers on the market.

8 Boss PH-2 Super Phaser
Introduced in 1984 and replaced by the PH-3 in 2000, the PH-2 remains a popular seller on the used pedal market. The reason players opt for this model over the more elaborate PH-3 comes down to its analogue circuit, and thus its more organic tone.

9 MXR CSP026 '74 Vintage Script Phase 90
This particular Phase 90 model is a reissue of the classic 'script era' circuit of 1974. These pedals are known for their more mellow tones and are a good choice for players who just want the subtle warmth of a phaser and not too much else.

10 Keeley BubbleTron Flanger/Phaser
The only combination flanger-phaser on today's list, the BubbleTron was specifically designed to honour the modulation tones achieved by Frank Zappa on his records in the 70s and 80s. This wildly versatile pedal actually includes two distinct phase circuits: a classic LFO-based phaser along with a 'dynamic phaser' that responds particularly well to variations of pick attack.

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Ones TO Watch

BLAIR DUNLOP

As the son of a folk legend Blair Dunlop's foray into music was not without pedigree, but he's more than earned his stripes since. He talks to Sam Roberts about Duo Jets and five-a-side football...

"There were always instruments around the house, as my parents are both musicians, so it never felt like a conscious decision. I've played for as long as I can remember." Blair tells us of his beginnings as a musician, carefully omitting that his father, Ashley Hutchings, was one of the leading lights of the British Folk Boom in the late 1960s through his work with Fairport Convention and Steeleye Span.

His start in the arts came at around six, but there was also a time where he had the opportunity to pursue a career in acting – he played a young Willy Wonka in Tim Burton's 2005 adaptation of *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* – but his future always was with a six-string, or possibly a football, in hand.

"The acting thing kind of happened around me, music was always my first love. Well, music and football, but I was no good at football!" he declares. "Some people would say I was no good at either... but those people have never seen me play five-a-side!"

BROAD HORIZONS

If anyone was questioning his musical talent, they can't have been doing so for long. His first full-length album – 2012's *Blight & Blossom* – featured collaborations with Larkin Poe and his take on an unreleased Richard Thompson track among the highlights, and it led to him winning the prestigious BBC Radio 2 Horizon Folk Award in 2013.

That success was followed by another two well received records in *House of Jacks* and *Gilded*, but on his fourth full length LP, *Notes From An Islan*d, he develops a more mature sociopolitical undertone to his music.

"I never really sit down with a political agenda when I write but there are a few references in the record." The 26-year-old admits. "I think that is more of a reflection on the crazy time the last couple of years has been. I guess the album draws parallels between personal and national isolationism."

On *Notes From An Island*, he maintained close working relationships with Dave Burn, Gita Langley and Ed Harcourt (Sophie Ellis-Bextor, Paloma Faith, The Libertines et al).

"Working with Ed was a real pleasure; he brought so much to the record." Blair reflects on the Mercury Prize-nominated songwriter. "There was a really healthy to-and-fro between us, never conflicting but always constructive. He's very good at creating a vibe in the studio, one or two late night whiskey infused takes, and he's got the magic ear!"

PLUG IN, BABY

Despite his pedigree in the British folk scene, including a brief period as the band leader of The Albion Band following his father's departure, he chose to approach his new album as an electric guitar player.

"It wasn't a particularly considered decision to play more electric on the new album; it was just the guitar I wrote most of the songs on! I switched to a Gretsch Duo Jet which was a big change because I've always played Teles and Strats. I don't know if it's the Bigsby or the Filter'Trons or even the aesthetic, but it's changed the way I play electric!"

When asked about his recently acquired Duo Jet he remains coy. "I think it's best to say that the guitar found me rather than vice versa... Shall we say that it's not anyone's as much as it just happens to be in my possession right now?" Although he does concede that it's a happy coincidence. "I'm so glad I came across it though. I've always loved the sound of a Gretsch but never got on with them before this one. There's just something about it!"

In many ways, Blair still approaches his guitar playing as an acoustic/fingerstyle player, in spite of his newly acquired affinity for Duo Jets.

"I hybrid pick a lot now, so I'm not as much of an exponent of fingerstyle playing as I was when I first started making records." His acoustic influence still lends its hand to his choice of tunings too, derived from his back catalogue of acoustic influencers. "I still play in quite a few alternate tunings, and I learnt to play in variants on DADGAD and Open C because I was inspired by acoustic fingerstyle guitarists who used them."

"I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S THE BIGSBY OR THE FILTER'TRONS OR THE AESTHETIC, BUT THE GRETSCH HAS CHANGED THE WAY I PLAY"

It only seems fitting then, that prior to the announcement of his new album, Blair embarked on an Australian tour, most notably playing at Port Fairy Folk Festival in Victoria and opening for instrumental flamenco duo Rodrigo Y Gabriela.

"Australia is ace, I love it. The recent tour was very fun for many reasons; chiefly among them was that my mum came out with me as she'd never been to Aus before." Blair humbly admits. "It was the least rock 'n' roll touring party of all time, but amazing in its own way. I love the festivals over there, they're very special."

With big name songwriters in his corner and folk in his DNA, Blair Dunlop could help bring the genre back to the forefront of the UK music scene. He's not resting on his laurels, either – focus has now shifted to an extensive UK tour to support the album, as well as working on its follow-up... provided he can tear himself away from the football, that is. "Writing the next album and watching the World Cup will be the main things occupying my mind this summer!" he adds.

Notes From An Island **is out on 18 May via Gilded Wings Records.**

Why I *Love My…*

JAMIE LENMAN

& HIS YAMAHA RGX

Former Reuben frontman Jamie Lenman is synonymous with his beaten-up Yamaha RGX. Here he tells Sam Roberts why it sounds like razor blades…

1 I love my…
"White Yamaha RGX, the guitar I've played almost exclusively since I started gigging."

2 How I got it…
"I got it to replace the first guitar I ever had, which was also a white RGX, that I'd won in a songwriting competition my school put me in for when I was 10. Instead of getting any prize money myself, the competition awarded my school a bunch of vouchers for Yamaha equipment and they got it for me, and gave it to me in assembly on my birthday. Then when I was a teenager I took it apart and couldn't get it back together properly, so I convinced my band a new guitar was a professional expense and we drained the gig account to buy this to replace it. I got a good deal 'cause I worked in a music shop at the time - essential for struggling musicians!"

3 It's special because…
"It just keeps on going. Anyone can see that it's been through wars and tours, and it's basically held together with metal plates and stickers. I don't treat it gently - there's too much energy flying about on stage to do anything daintily, so it gets flung about and one day it'll just explode in the middle of a show. I'm quite looking forward to that actually, I think that'd be a good point to retire. I just can't find any other guitar with quite the same sound…"

4 It's perfect for…
"Playing those big, chunky bar chord riffs, which are my stock and trade. I play mostly in drop D tuning, and then take the whole thing down a further semitone so it's nice and deep – but with a new set of strings on it, it has the weight and the definition, so it's perfect for what I do. I like those 'chuggalugga' palm mutes too, low down on the neck – they just sound menacing and awesome. I'm not really a shredder, so I don't often get past the fifth fret!"

5 It sounds best with…
"My Laney Tube Fusion FX amp, which is in the same sort of state. It used to be a little practice amp but the speaker blew, so my tech chopped the top part off and I use it as a head. Even though the guitar is the star, it never sounds the same through another amp, and again I've never been able to find a replacement. I'm skating on thin ice here!"

6 Hear it on…
"All the albums I've ever made. Every now and then in the studio we might double things or pick out a certain part with a different guitar to get a different tone but the overriding sound of the music I make is that guitar on that amp. I think it comes across best on *Waterloo Teeth* from my new record, huge riff on that one, sounds like heavy razor blades. Just how I like it!"

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Fender Custom Shop 56 NOS Strat - fiesta red £2,599
Fender Custom Shop 57 Journeyman Relic Strat - fiesta red £2,875
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Gibson Les Paul Custom - wine red - used/1976 ..... £3,099
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Gibson Les Paul Deluxe Gold Top - 2011 Limited edition reissue .. £1,669
Gibson Les Paul Standard - used/2011 - wine red £1,569
Gibson Les Paul Standard honeyburst - used/1995 ..... £1,575
Gibson SG Junior - used/1967 ..... £1,690
Gibson Tom Murphy Aged 1959 Les Paul Historic Reissue - 2005 ... £5,390
Gretsch G6128T Duo Jet - cadillac green - used/2015 ..... £1,790
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PRS Custom 24 + bird inlays - used/1997 - cherry sunburst £1,699
PRS S2 Standard 24 - Satin Limited Edition - sunburst - used/2016 ..... £890
Rickenbacker 360/12 12 string - jetglo - circa 1997 ..... £2,159
Rickenbacker Combo 900 - used/1965 ..... £1,290
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Fretbuzz

Your letters. This month: Workshop wonders, getting the grooves out, and an ode to an unloved Gibson model...

LETTER OF THE MONTH

WORKSHOP OF WONDERS

Dear Chris and the TGM team, I buy the mag religiously every month from my local newsagent, and it's always a pleasure to read, but I wanted to single someone and something out for special mention, and that's Huw Price and his fantastic Workshop features. Every single month, it seems that Huw is attempting the sort of high-level repair, build or restoration that 99.9999 per cent of guitar players wouldn't even dream of – even the ones who think they're a bit handy, like me!

But the thing that I really love, and that has me shaking my head with a mixture of admiration and disbelief, isn't just the fastidious attention to detail that he documents in these projects, or even his passion for vintage authenticity… it's the sheer gumption that he regularly displays to just have a go and try things that are a bit outside the box.

How many of us would even think to try a bit of at-home torrefaction using a regular oven like Huw did in the Martin kit project a few months ago? Or who would contemplate building their own attenuator, for that matter? And then there's the one that inspired this letter – creating his own vintage-looking capacitor tubes the Fender amp restoration from last month [June 2017]. I still can't quite believe that Huw managed to find the markings of the cardboard tubes from the 50s… then printed them onto similar card to the original and finally *sprayed with nitrocellulose so they look old*! It was such a perfect exemplar of everything I love about Workshop – attention to detail, an obsessive pursuit of period accuracy, and some true ingenuity mixed in there, too.

Given that Workshop runs in the mag every month, it's probably easy to get desensitised to how what a brilliant and inventive feature it consistently is, so I wanted to take my hat off to Huw, and to you, for continually inspiring me to go down the shed and try stuff out!
Charlie Edwards, via email

TGM **Thanks for your email Charlie, and we'll pass your kind words on to Huw. The reaction you describe is very similar to our own when his feature is submitted every month – it's impossible not to marvel at the bold and ambitious things he attempts. We hope he keeps inspiring you and others to try things out yourself – but stay safe, Huw is hugely experienced and certainly knows what he's doing. When in doubt, leave it to the pros!**

NAILED IT

Dear *TGM*, I'm enjoying your vintage bench test features, the pictures are gorgeous and the text insightful. Regarding Huw's comment that suggested fretboard divots may be down to long nails… I wondered if it was possible that one reason for excessive fretboard wear on older guitars related to the use of heavier strings? The greater pressure required to fret a note may perhaps plough a furrow faster than the lightweight strings popular today?

Playing with The Kaisers [Scottish beat revivalists formed in 1992 – Ed], I usually chose period-style flatwounds with a wound third, but they're not for the faint-hearted. I have a few vintage strings and these seem incredibly heavy, no wonder so many old guitars need a neck reset! I've enclosed a pic here of a pitted Harmony neck and some 60s string packets. Is there a proven repair route for this kind of wear?
Kaiser Matt Armstrong, via email

TGM **Huw Price responds: Thanks for getting in touch, Matt – unfortunately due to the nature of the printed word, it may not have been apparent that my comment about the nail clippers comment was made with my tongue placed firmly within my cheek! Even so, the day before your letter arrived I was discussing this very subject with a luthier friend. Apparently he sometimes sees gouged rosewood 'boards on relatively new guitars, so it's not a thing of the past, but that doesn't actually discount the fingernail theory.**

A few years back I did a fretless bass conversion and the 'board had to be coated with superglue to protect it from the strings. This is de rigeur for fretless basses, so maybe gouges are string- rather than fingernail-related as you suggest. But since these wear patterns are often present on guitars that were made after the mid-1960s, the heavy gauge theory could be moot because most players were using lighter sets with plain thirds by then. Besides which, the gouges often seem to occur under the plain rather than the wound strings.

Perhaps taller modern frets provide some protection, so it may be helpful to consider older Gibson guitars that have been owned by jazz musicians. They're the ones with even rather than localised wear along the back of the neck because they can play in more than three keys. This type of guitar often has very low frets too, but fingerboard wear tends to be nonexistent.

This could debunk the tall fret theory, but we'd have to consider whether the flatwound strings those players prefer are kinder on the 'board as you suggest. Or it could just mean that jazz musicians take more pride in their appearance than the average rocker or blues player and whip out the clippers on a regular basis! Of course this brings us full circle but in defence of long fingernails… they can come in useful when we're digging our way out of rabbit holes!

WRITTEN A LETTER OF THE MONTH?

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LOST YOUR TED

Hello, I really enjoyed your article about Ted McCarty in the June issue. I was partially interested in how he managed to return Gibson to profit in such a short space of time. The parallels with Gibson's recent bankruptcy are obvious (is that why you ran it then?). Clearly, the problems Gibson are now facing are different from the postwar metal restrictions. However, I wonder what Ted would make of the situation and how would he act?

Hopefully, Gibson's management team are asking themselves the same question and guitarists in another 60 years will be reading about another visionary who saved Gibson for a second time.
James, via email

TGM **Thanks for getting in touch, James. The timing of our Ted McCarty piece was purely coincidental but he certainly did turn things around following a difficult period for Gibson. There are several Gibson players among the team here and plenty of love for the company's iconic designs – we wish everyone at Gibson well and hope the business successfully navigates its way through this troubled time.**

GRADING ON A CORVUS

Dear *TGM*, I realised that my 1983/84 Gibson Corvus is old enough to be considered vintage now, but apart from the odd derogatory reference, I've never seen an article in praise of this ugly duckling! With that in mind, I thought I'd share my story with one of Gibson's 'other' guitars.

As a young teacher in the 80s, I was on a low wage, there was little left over to buy a good guitar, so made do with cheap, nasty pawn shop clunkers several Frankenstein guitars I'd made with skip wood. But then one day I saw an ad from Peter Cook's for a Gibson Corvus 1 for £160, including hard case and delivery for £160. It was a lot of money back then, but it was a good deal, so I maxed out my credit card.

When it arrived, I was in seventh heaven. A real Nashville-made Gibson. No matter that it looked weird – it was a real Gibson, with a neck that was as easy to play as putting on your comfy slippers. It was about then the *Guitar Handbook* by Ralph Denyer came out, and I had also joined a band with some friends. We had a varied repertoire ranging from Neil Young to the Shadows, Beatles to Bach, so I set about using the circuit diagrams from the Denyer book to make my Corvus the ultimate versatile guitar.

As all Corvus models had body routs under the scratchplates for the various pickup combinations offered, I was able put a Seymour Duncan Hot Strat Stack in the neck for a Shadows tone, a DiMarzio X2N went into the middle position for the heavier material and I kept the alnico V bridge humbucker remained for the bluesy material.

This magnificently ugly guitar saw service at gigs from 1986 through to 2003. It's had a refret in that time, some new saddles after the original Zamak ones wore out, and even a Roland synth pickup to cover keyboard parts!

After my wife bought me a real 1997 Les Paul Standard in 2001, the Corvus went into semi-retirement, but it still comes out now and again for nostalgic purposes, or to answer a student's curiosity. A Gibson is a Gibson at the end of the day, and this one has served me very well indeed – so give Corvus a chance!
Chris Gardner, via email

TGM **Thanks for sharing your story, Chris. It's true that a good guitar is a good guitar, and some of us really love things that are a bit different to the norm – take care of your Corvus!**

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New Music

We round up and rate a selection of this month's guitar-driven new releases

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ON The Guitar Magazine OFFICE STEREO

Eric Clapton
LIFE IN 12 BARS

For Slowhand fans left nonplussed by Clapton's anaemic autobiography a decade ago, this new feature-length biopic (released via Eagle Rock) and its soundtrack (on Sony Music) is a far more satisfying project. Faithfully following the documentary – directed by Oscar winner Lili Fini Zanuck – the OST acts as a wide-ranging greatest hits with five unreleased gems thrown in for good measure.

Clapton's links to the blues are a constant reference point as he reminisces about his first encounters with the genre via a kids TV show. Both Big Bill Broonzy and three cuts by Muddy Waters feature on the soundtrack, including a lascivious live version of *I Got My Mojo Working* from the latter's appearance at the 1960 Newport Jazz Festival.

Ever the outsider – particularly in his early days – Eric often cut a lonely figure during his time with The Yardbirds, kicking them to the kerb when his blues authenticity would have been compromised by their pop success.

As a player, the shackles are fully loosened during his stint with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers – both tracks included in *...12 Bars*, the wonderfully fluid *Steppin' Out* and *All Your Love* are prime Eric – a gritty, angry yet fully controlled tone and style.

His Cream years, seem mired in rancour with fellow members Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker, and are dismissed as a marriage of convenience thanks to their instrumental prowess. The expected selections of *Sunshine Of Your Love*, *I Feel Free* and *Strange Brew* may not shed any new light on the Cream story, but they do sum up Clapton as he straddled psych rock and progressive blues.

The documentary then takes a dark turn as addiction and affairs of the heart dominate – predominantly Clapton's attempts to win the affections of George Harrison's wife Pattie. The Duane Allman hook-up on the *Layla* album remains an astonishing snapshot of two guitar legends at the top of their game firing on all cylinders, however.

After failing to win Pattie (at first) and being devastated by the death of Jimi Hendrix, Clapton spends a couple of years holed up in his country pile self-medicating on heroin and booze. His mid-70s gigs were marred by alcoholism and shocking errors of judgment, of which the pro-Enoch Powell on-stage tirade remains his lowest public moment.

While the lion's share of the attention on *...12 Bars* is given to Eric's first decade as a musician, with the next four skipped through quickly, the message is clear – this tortured genius has emerged a better man. **SH**

8/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *Peter Green, Buddy Guy, BB King*

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Father John Misty
GOD'S FAVOURITE CUSTOMER

Josh Tillman's fourth long player under the Father John Misty moniker arrives just over a year after his third, the acclaimed *Pure Comedy*. Yet where its predecessor weighed in at 74 existential minutes and was at times a record that made you work hard to love it, *God's Favourite Customer* is a punchier, fat-free offering that's just over half as long but fizzes with the ferocious intelligence and emotional resonance that characterises Tillman's best work. The product of living in a hotel for two months amidst personal turmoil, many of the songs are again piano-driven but there's no shortage of guitar action. Tillman, longtime collaborator Jonathan Wilson and touring guitarist David Vandervelde contribute acoustic and electric guitar textures to a sonic stew that features several nods to The White Album, not least on the spectacular closer *We're Only People (And There's Not Much Anyone Can Do About That*). **CV**

9/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *Jonathan Wilson, White Album-era Beatles*

Johnny Marr
CALL THE COMET

Call The Comet's great pleasure is in how, with Johnny Marr's former bandmate wrapping The Smiths' legacy like soggy chips in right wing tabloids, the guitarist seems driven to reclaim their musical past. Nostalgic flourishes – the *Queen Is Dead* ferocity of *The Tracers*, *Actor Attractor*'s echoes of *How Soon Is Now?* – dominate this absorbing collection. Its melodies, too – not least on *Spiral Cities* and *Day In Day Out* – would suit Morrissey's *Low In High School*. At times, as on *Hi Hello* – which is not only brim-full of trademark jangly guitars, but also finds him whooping and moaning like the arch-miserablist himself – it almost feels like revenge. But *Call The Comet* never depends upon history. It merely utilises, then transcends it, as proven by the anthemic *Bug*, or *Walk Into The Sea*: its piano chords and trebly guitar melody swelling into a howling wall of guitars. His lyrics might often be dead on arrival, but Marr hasn't sounded this alive in years. **WW**

8/10

TRY IF YOU LIKE *The Smiths, Morrisey, Modest Mouse*

ALSO OUT THIS MONTH

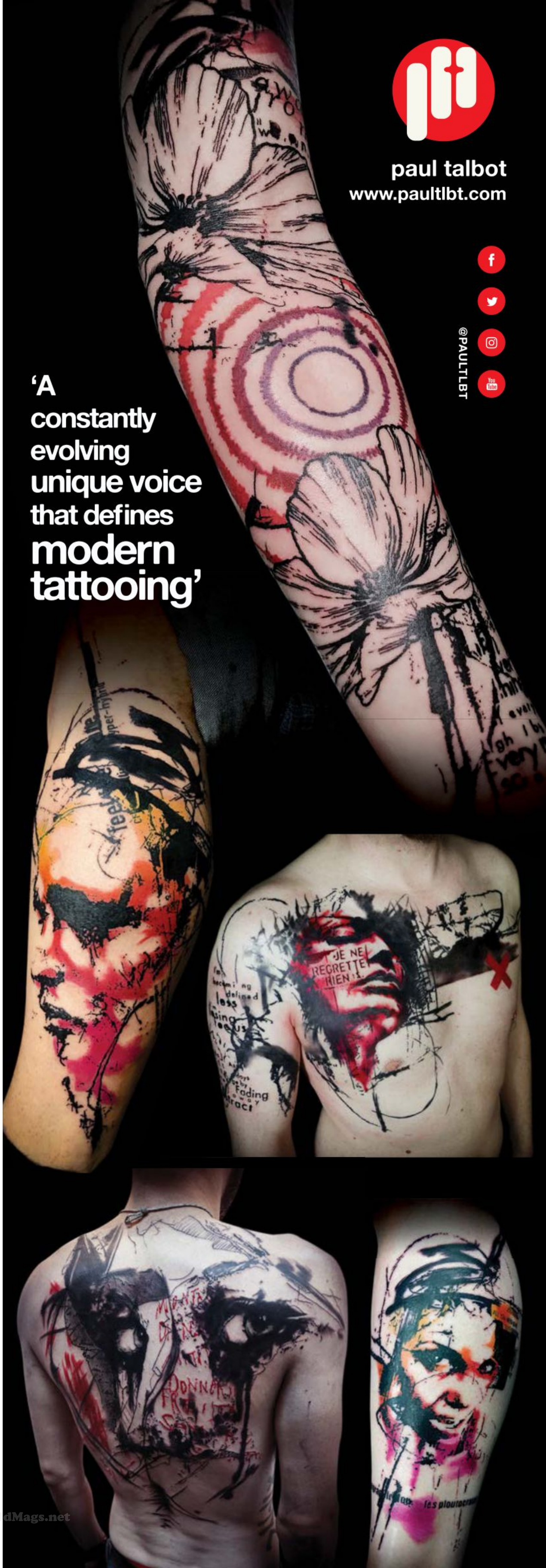
Our pick of the best other guitar releases this month…

Damien Jurado
THE HORIZON JUST LAUGHED
Seattle songwriter offers variety and mastery on his deepest album yet

Richard Hawley & Ollie Trevers
FUNNY COW OST
Hawley brings real warmth and vintage guitar vibes to this acclaimed film OST

Grant Green
SLICK! LIVE AT OIL CAN HARRY'S
Sublime previously unreleased live jazz odyssey with the Green in top form

Biffy Clyro
MTV UNPLUGGED
MTV's acoustic icon returns with a career-spanning set from the Scottish rockers



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NIGHT SHIFT

As Colorado's own rock 'n' soul sensations Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats return with a second hip-shaking studio album, Chris Vinnicombe sits down with their main man to talk guitars, influences and life on the road...

Photography ELEANOR JANE

Nathaniel Rateliff's road to stardom is about as far from an overnight success story as it gets. Childhood friends Rateliff and bassist Joseph Pope III left their small hometown of Hermann, Missouri and moved 800-or-so miles west to Denver in 1998. For the next 15 years, despite establishing a considerable local following and releasing music via Rounder Records and Decca, none of Rateliff's band or acoustic solo projects caught fire. In 2013, in a last-ditch attempt to give up his day job as a gardener – career prospects were limited, as he had no high-school diploma, having quit school at 13 soon after his father was killed in a car accident on his way to church – Rateliff enlisted the services of his best friend Pope alongside a cast of other local musicians. With the aim of writing songs that sounded like a fusion of The Band and Sam & Dave, Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats were born.

Rateliff, Pope and co's big break came in August 2015, when they were invited to perform live to an audience of millions on US television courtesy of *The Tonight Show* host Jimmy Fallon. A rip-roaring rendition of the single *S.O.B.* – which saw the singer deliver a performance somewhere between a turbocharged Van Morrison and vintage James Brown – received a standing ovation from the studio audience. It certainly didn't hurt album sales either. The band's eponymous debut peaked at No. 2 in the Billboard Top Alternative Albums Chart. According to reports, Paul McCartney even called Fallon the following day to ask: "Who was that guy?"

S.O.B., with its rousing refrain of 'son of a bitch, give me a drink', is something of a Trojan Horse – what sounds like a party anthem on first listen is actually a song about the withdrawal symptoms Rateliff faced when he gave up alcohol for a time in an effort to save his marriage.

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And although The Night Sweats are known for their foot-stomping live shows, there's pain in their bones, too, as evidenced by 2018's *Tearing At The Seams* – a new album that combines the funk and soul breaks of *Shoe Boot* and *Intro* with real-life break-ups in *Still Out There Running* and *Babe I Know*, both of which are informed by Rateliff's recent divorce.

THE SESSIONS

"We first went away to New Mexico and rented a house down there that we set up as a studio," recalls the frontman when we catch up with him between dates on the Night Sweats' UK tour. "We first started working on what was gonna be possibly demos, but then I talked to [*Tearing At The Seams* producer] Richard Swift about taking those if we thought they were right and trying to make 'em work. So we did some of that.

"We did a lot of playing live in the room down there and a lot of us all playing in the same room out at his place as well. Since the first record, we've really become a band, so I just kind of wanted to feature that and also to use the way they play to influence me to write differently than I normally do."

> "WE'VE REALLY BECOME A BAND, SO I JUST WANTED TO FEATURE THAT"

Whether holed up in New Mexico or in Swift's National Freedom studio in Oregon, the songs came together organically: "It was pretty natural with Richard. A lot of times, we'd just be jamming, trying to figure out the structure of the song together, and just kind of running through it, over and over again, and then once in a while he'd just peek his head in and be like: 'Sounds good guys!' So we'd usually play it until we'd nailed the structure and when we'd play it all the way through, that would be the take."

DIVISION OF LABOUR

When recording the guitar parts on the band's debut album, Rateliff "did kinda everything", solos included, aside from one part played by drummer Patrick Meese. This time around, Rateliff was focused more

Above **Nathaniel and his Night Sweats guitar partner, Luke Mossman**

Opposite **Although more of a rosewood man when it comes to Fender guitars Nathaniel is a big fan of this maple-Necked '72 Thinline Telecaster**

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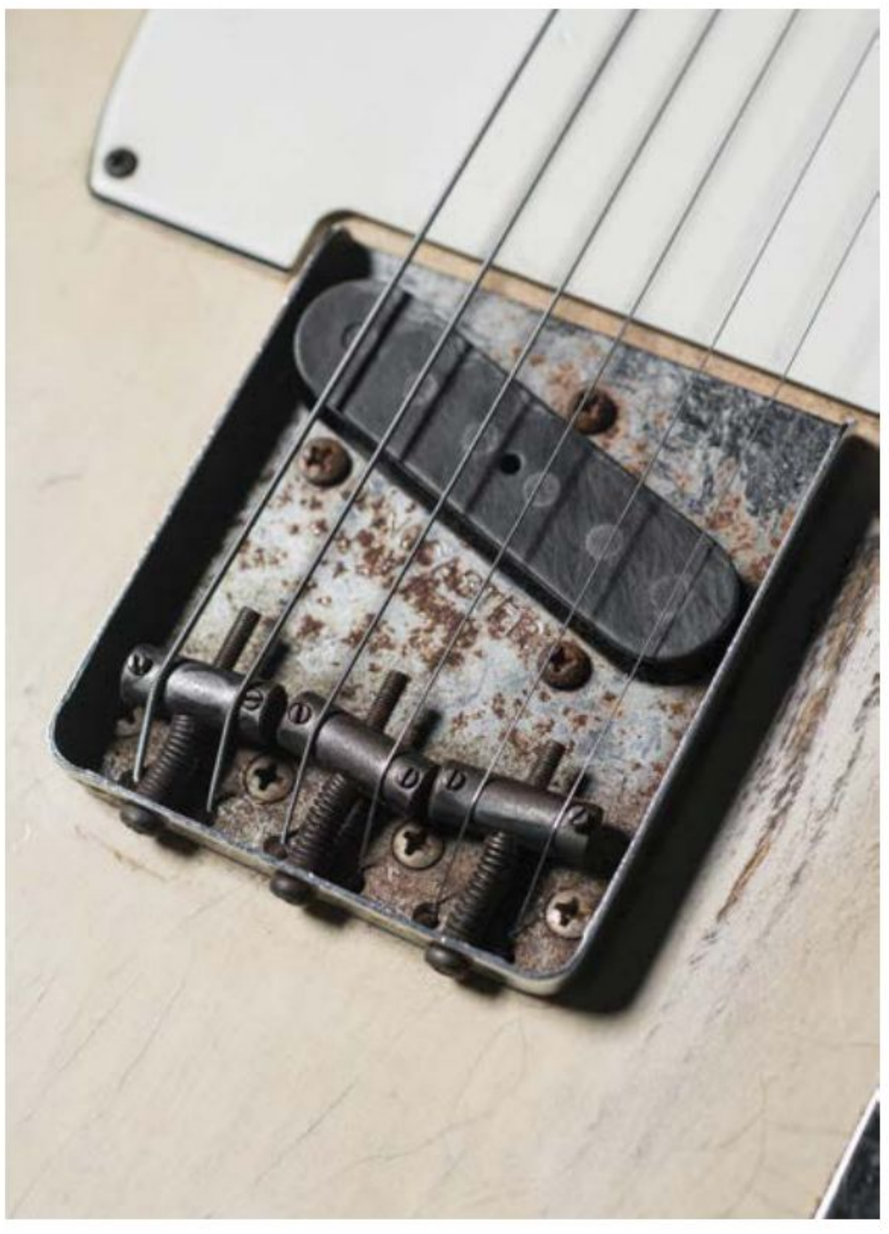
This Danocaster Single Cut is Nathaniel's guitar of choice in a live setting



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on writing, and leaned heavily on The Night Sweats' other guitarist, Luke Mossman. "I'm kind of more of a melodic guy," says Rateliff. "But Luke studied jazz in school and so it's been nice to kind of learn some things from him, really just like my chord knowledge. Sometimes I'd be kicking around with an idea and I'd get kinda stuck in the progression and he'd be like, well, you could do this or you can do this... so that was kinda helpful, but the parts just kinda happen. I think the only little lead thing I play on the whole record is on *Coolin' Out*, which ended up being kinda last minute..."

The raw energy spilling out of the grooves of both of The Night Sweats' long players gives the impression that the band's transition from studio to stage is a relatively easy one. "Well, it is now, but for a moment there, we were like: 'Shit, we have to learn how to play these songs!'" admits the singer. "We would be sitting in a room together and the song from start to finish would take about three hours. And then you just move on. So you know, that was like last year that we were working on that, so some of the stuff we had to relearn."

TANGLED UP IN BLUES

Although Rateliff still plays a lot of acoustic guitar, his six-string influences include a range of players, many of whom are steeped in the blues, but there's indie-rock in the mix, too, and plenty more besides: "I really love CW Stoneking, he's an Australian, I guess he does like jungle-boogie kinda stuff. As a kid, I was a pretty big Duane Allman fan. I went through a lot of different phases as a young kid. I love Jimi Hendrix... I went through the whole hippy phase and then Jonny Greenwood was definitely a favourite at one point, too.

"I really dug 60s and 70s guitar, but I'd keep picking away and there'd be different things that I'd learn and stuff that I liked and I'd sort of adapt that, and do my own variation of it, y'know? Whether it be like, chicken-pickin' or doublestops or whatever, slide... I love playing slide guitar, but I can't ever seem to make the sound of it work for what we're doing. It really only appears if I'm playing dobro on a song, which we haven't done on this record, but I did on a couple of other things."

When it comes to gear, Rateliff's poison is currently Gibson acoustics from a very specific period: "I've been kind of collecting stuff throughout the years and back

Nathaniel got this offset Danocaster model to sub for the Jaguar that he used for recording the album

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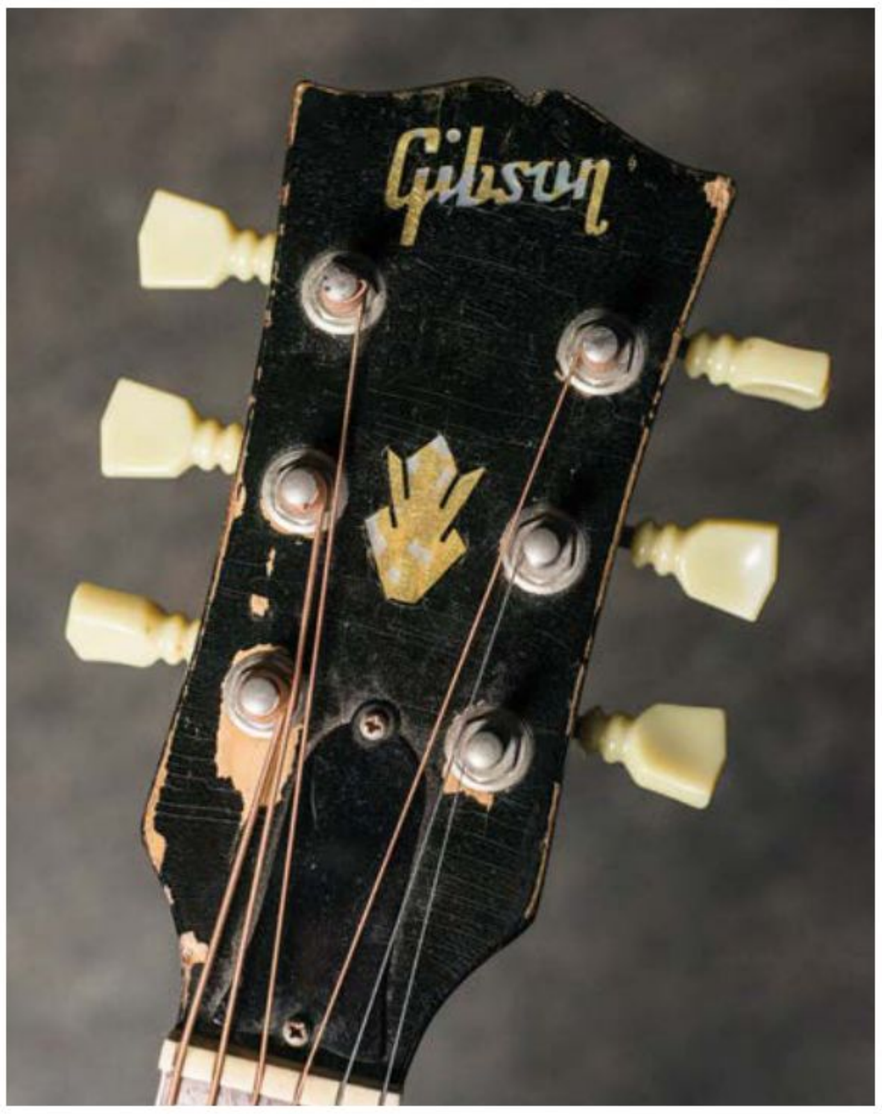

home, I have acoustics from varying different years. But for recording, I love the necks on Gibson acoustics from ’65 to ’67 – they’re just so tiny, almost like an SG. I used to have the bigger Martins with a wider, almost like classical neck, which is fine, but I bought one of those 60s Gibsons and everything I played sounded like *Beggars Banquet* or some Stones tune and I was like, ‘Man, maybe that’s what they were doin’!”

GAMBLE ON

Although Rateliff has brought a 1965 Gibson J-200 along for the ride on the band’s European dates, he currently favours a model built two years later: “I thought I’d love that jumbo but I actually prefer my Country Western, which is a ’67, which I won. It was Jamie Mefford’s. He’s our front-of-house guy and he also helped us co-produce this record, was there for all the demos and set up the studio.

“He had this ’67 Country Western laying around and he was kind of baiting me with it. He let me borrow it and I was like, man this thing fucking just sounds so good! And we ended up having a little in-the-band gambling thing that I ended up winning by playing dice and Jamie was like: ‘How much did you win?’ I told him and he was like: ‘That’s kind of about what I wanted for that guitar,’ and I was like: ‘Well, there you go…’”

Inevitably, though, one guitar is never enough… “I was trying to work out what was going to be most useful,” says the singer, “especially travelling to Europe, since there’s kind of a mix of acoustic songs on the record with pretty drastic tunings – *Hey Mama* is in D, the whole thing’s in drop D – so, it’s kind of a pain in the ass for our tech to switch from D to E flat and all that stuff, and then capo… so that’s why I have the three acoustics. The third one I have is a ’55 J-160E, and that’s what I’ve been using for *You Worry Me* and a couple other

> “I LOVE THE NECKS ON 60S GIBSON ACOUSTICS – THEY’RE JUST SO TINY”

Above & opposite **Nathaniel’s main acoustic is the 1967 Gibson Country Western that he bought with the winnings from a dice game**

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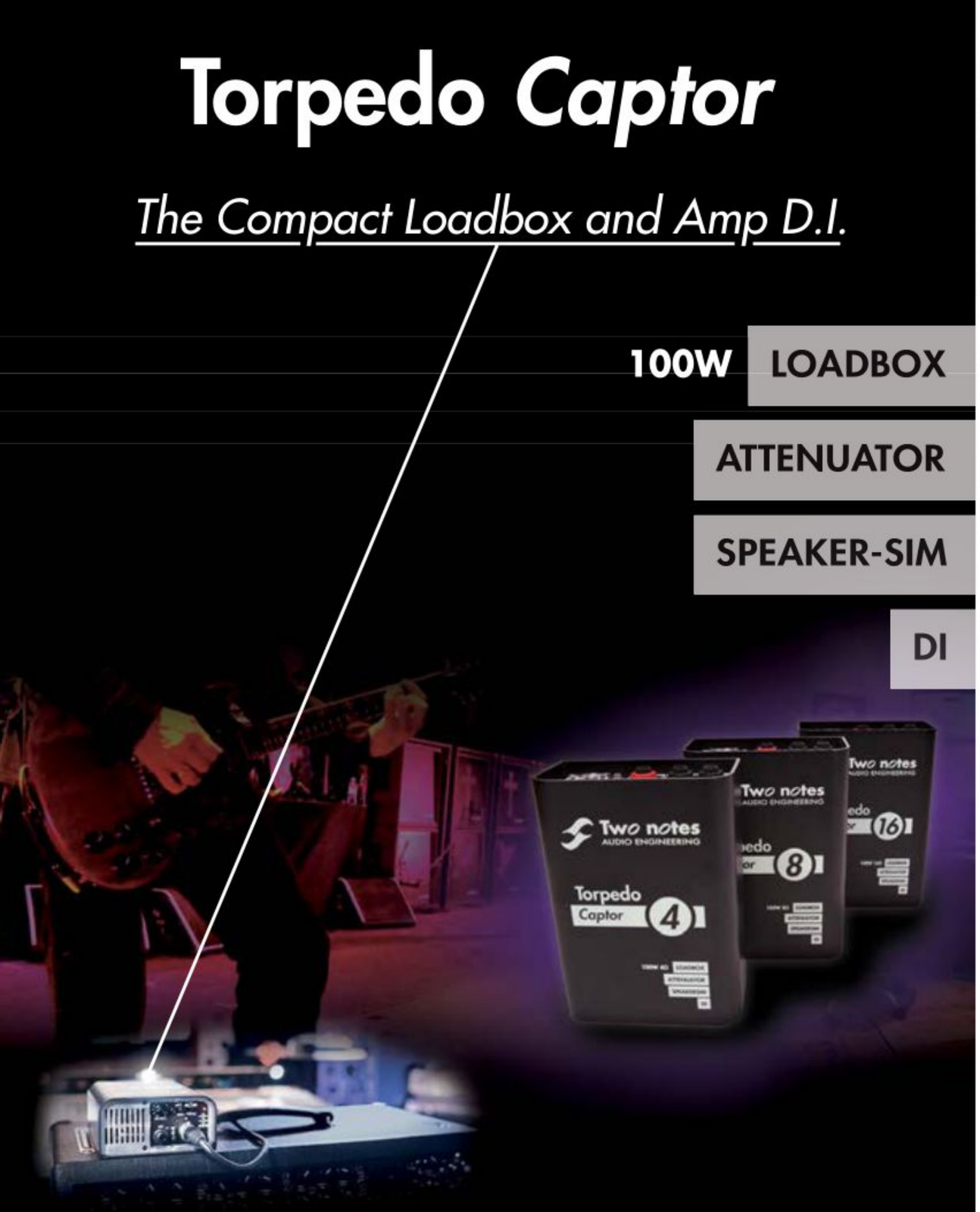

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things. It's quite a bit different than the Country Western, it's a little more boxy I think, but I really like it.

"When I used to play solo I always used a classical guitar through an amp, and that was really kind of my instrument for a long time. But I've fallen in love with those late-60s Gibson acoustics. I just got an almost identical Country Western to the one I have, to have more consistency. Then I won't take the J-200 out with me anymore. They just have this voice to them, they are really strummy and open, and that's kind of what I'm looking for, for everything I'm doing with this band. I have an LG-2 at home, like a '46, and I love that thing and I actually begrudgingly put a pickup in it, which means I've put a little bigger hole where the endpin was."

FRIENDS ELECTRIC

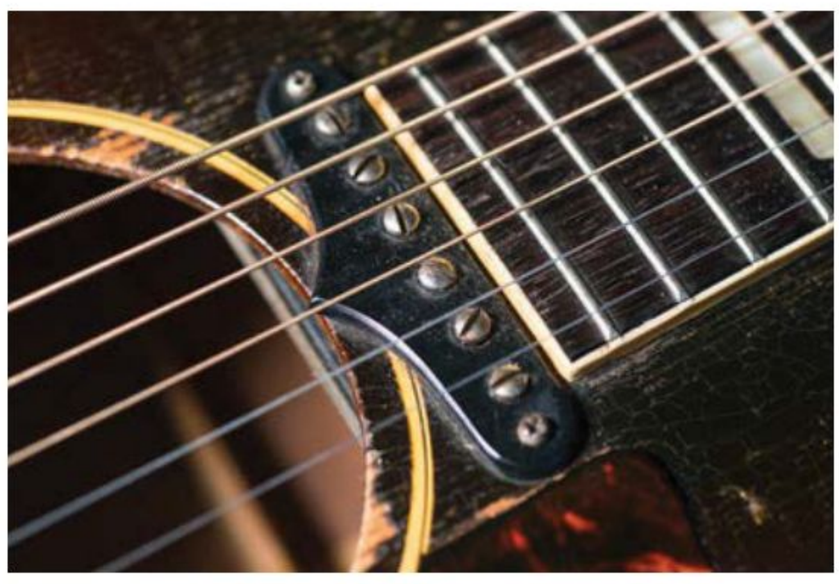
When it's time to plug in, Rateliff leaves Kalamazoo behind and heads towards Fullerton. "On the record, I ended up getting an older Jaguar that I really liked in combination with the Blackface Princeton," he reveals. "I mean, really I plugged it in and was like: 'Wow, that kinda sounds like shit!' And that was kind of what I went with! I think that sometimes my favourite guitars aren't the best sounding, but y'know they have a lot of character. But they're not perfect-sounding."

For live duties, his electrics are a mixture of bolt-ons built by luthier Dan Strain and a vintage Fender: "Dan made me a white Danocaster Single Cut – I love that thing – and I have the Lollar Special in the bridge position. Even Dan was like, well that doesn't sound like a Tele... okay, whatever! Instead of the Jaguar that I used on the record, I ended up getting another Danocaster Offset. My other Tele is a Fender '72 Thinline with a maple neck, but I prefer the rosewood stuff, usually."

RED LIGHT FERVOUR

Of all the instruments that the Night Sweats take on the road with them, Rateliff's remarkable raw soul voice is the most important: "I've been trying to be more disciplined, but I still probably drink more than most people do!" he laughs. "Some of the guys will go out, but my voice is my main responsibility and if I can't sing, then we don't have a show. Sometimes, you can't really go out – it can be kinda lonely, but I'm learning how to take better care of myself, slowly but surely."

Vocally, his influences range from all-time soul greats to bands that – like his own – made backing vocals

Nathaniel's J-160E is one of three acoustics that he takes out on tour with him

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Main image **Fender Princetons feature heavily in the backline for both guitarists**
Below **Nathaniel (left) and Luke's (right) pedalboards are small but carefully chosen**

THE SIMPLE THINGS

The Night Sweats' riotous soul sound is powered by a relatively modest selection of pedals and amps

Nathaniel Rateliff's gradual move to smaller combos is one that is familiar to many of us. "When I was younger, I bought a Twin, but they're so heavy," he winces. "I quickly learned I didn't want to carry that thing around. Then I moved to a Deluxe Reverb – I still have that same amp, the Silverface, mine is a '67 or a '68 – and I love that thing, but it's so loud! I started using the Princetons, just fell in love with the amp, so then when Fender started to reissue the Silverfaces we started using those, with Weber speakers – I don't like the Celestion that Fender was putting in there.

"I had a buddy in Denver who rewired 'em and like pulled out the harnesses and put cloth wiring and all handwired, point-to-point stuff in, and I liked 'em but then I found a Blackface Princeton that I got in Oregon, for this record, and I just felt like that was really what I was going for. It's slightly more jangly, whereas some of the newer ones can be kind of abrasive and I was trying to work that out of my sound, I guess."

Neither Rateliff nor Luke Mossman rely on a complicated array of stompboxes. "I don't have tons of effects," says Rateliff. "I have a pretty minimal board with a pretty simple EP Booster – the more simple it is, the better! I feel that way about amps, too… you never get anything that does everything, but you can get something that does one thing really good. That's always been what I've stuck to."

a key component of their sound: "I was always a huge Sam Cooke fan. I always liked people that had really unique things in their voice or really great control, like Nat King Cole, the way he enunciates, his phrasing. The same thing with Sam Cooke.

"THE RECORDS I LOVE ARE PEOPLE SITTING IN A ROOM TOGETHER MAKING MUSIC"

But then there's certain things I like about the back-up singers on a Desmond Dekker record, or even the early Wailers stuff, the Studio One stuff. Some of the things I like are perfectly imperfect. Part of the Night Sweats thing was having more than one singer. I wanted everybody in the band to be able to sing."

That sense of humanity and perfect imperfection is writ large in the Night Sweats sound. And even in the digital age, there's still no substitute for the communion of musicians playing live, together: "On *Babe I Know*, it was myself and Patrick on drums, Mark [Shusterman] was on piano. And I was playing a little metal-bodied National and I had a Sennheiser 421 on it and that was also what I was singing into. I just propped the guitar up on my knee and leaned into it. I was like, that sounds good to me! That's what we went with and that was us just playing the take live.

"The records that I love are people sitting in a room together making music. One of my favourite singers and favourite live records is Ray Charles At Newport from 1958. That's what that band sounds like, live. People to know us as a live band and I wanted the record to hold up to that."

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RIDE REVIVAL

Ride's latest album *Weather Diaries* – their first for 21 years – is a welcome evolution of the band's storm of melody, noise and songwriting savvy. Richard Purden speaks to guitarist Andy Bell about gigging, gear and his career...

Creation Records boss Alan McGee once suggested that "it took Primal Scream six years to become a genius band. Ride have managed it in six months": and when the band fast-tracked themselves into the indie-guitar-band movement at the end of the 80s spearheaded by The Stone Roses, My Bloody Valentine, Primal Scream, Sonic Youth, The Smiths and others, Ride's Andy Bell was a new kind of guitar hero in an already vibrant and varied scene.

His success continued at the tail-end of the Brit-pop era with Hurricane #1, and he gave Oasis a vital shot in the arm by taking on the role of bassist and occasional songwriter for a decade, before a two-album stint with Beady Eye. Most recently, the rumblings that he was returning to "his first love" came to fruition when Ride announced a series live dates at the end of 2014.

At the time of the band's original breakthrough, 19-year-old Andy Bell was a rising star in the indie 'shoegaze' fraternity, releasing euphoric waves of effects-laden noise. When discussing his pre-Ride influences, the guitarist says music had become all-consuming by his early teens. "When The Smiths came out, I was still a bit young, I was 13 and obsessed with Johnny Marr and a bit of a copyist. By the time The Stone Roses came along, I was old enough to play gigs; they were my Beatles. With Ride, myself and Lawrence [Colbert, Ride's drummer], were obsessed by John Squire and Reni, which added so much to our musical style, there was that and a bit of Kevin Shields thrown in. I was like a mini Squire for a while; it was the same with Lawrence, Reni just took over. Eventually, I chilled on that and found my own way."

Bell and vocalist/guitarist Mark Gardener were boyhood friends who formed Ride in their hometown of Oxford with Colbert and bassist Steve Queralt. A love of abstract visuals and art informed their sound, as well as how they set out their stall after signing to Creation. An arresting image of an uncrested wave by surf and skateboard photographer Warren

"I WAS LIKE A MINI SQUIRE; IT WAS THE SAME WITH LAWRENCE, RENI TOOK OVER"

Andy Bell with 12-string Rickenbacker 330/12 at Field Day in London in June 2015

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Ride with modernised pedalboards at The Roundhouse in May 2015 in London

Bolster on their acclaimed debut long-player *Nowhere* was a sublime accompaniment to the music.

"Myself and Mark were schoolmates, and on one of the reading lists was *Ways Of Seeing* by John Berger, which we really liked. That one really connected with me, it was about simple but profound ideas that make you think about visuals and how you see them. We began making our own posters and record sleeves at art school. The bands we liked were into the same mentality; we wanted to make a visual as well as a musical statement – we were very in control of the artwork."

The experimental soundscapes they created in the studio proved to be a challenge live. But since reforming, Bell suggests he has – for the first time – been able to bring that to the new shows. "I've got so much more at my disposal now. Even when I was playing bass, I never stopped being a guitarist and kept up with guitars and pedals, which have changed a lot since the first time round – it's a different stratosphere now. When Ride started, I had a few pedals – fuzz, wah-wah, distortion and the Roland GP-16, which had about eight effects. Alan Moulder, who produced and mixed a lot of our early work, would put the guitars through an Ultra-Harmonizer unit on stuff like *Leave Them All Behind*; there's now a guitar pedal that can do that, so I can take that sound into the live environment."

As well as keeping the original four piece intact, the band also reunited with Moulder, who mixed 2017's *Weather Diaries* and the recent *Tomorrow's Shore* EP.

"*Catch You Dreaming* from the EP was originally part of *Weather Diaries*. We were able to go out to the far corners of the sound, it's more into the electronic side," says Bell of the recent work. "*Pulsar* is in the zone of early Ride, but there are touches of synth which add some fairy dust."

"SONGS THAT STAND THE TEST OF TIME OFTEN DON'T STAND OUT WHEN YOU WRITE THEM"

While the band were lumped in with the shoegaze scene, their infectious West Coast-influenced melodies and Bell's ability to write hooky anthems helped set them apart. "The idea with *Like A Daydream* was to write an early Beatles kind of song, but make it sound like My Bloody Valentine. When you write a bunch of songs, the ones that stand the test of time often don't stand out to you when you write them. *Vapour Trail* was one of the easiest and quickest to write. I threw it out in an afternoon – sometimes you don't feel like you have worked hard enough to make a classic. There was a guy living in my house who wrote this message to his girlfriend about being a vapour trail – I said: 'Mind if I nick that?'. With something like that, it's quick and more from the heart, maybe?

"It was the same with *Step Into My World* [Hurricane #1]. We had recorded about four tracks and Alan McGee kept saying: 'Play that again, turn it up!' and that became the one." Like early Oasis, it seemed to have a very Celtic feel. "Our singer Alex [Lowe] thought that one was a bit like Runrig. I always thought Big Country were a cool band... with a twin-guitar line there's only two ways you can go: Big Country or Thin Lizzy."

TICKET TO RIDE

Ride's reunion shows in the summer of 2015 proved to be a cathartic experience as much for the band as

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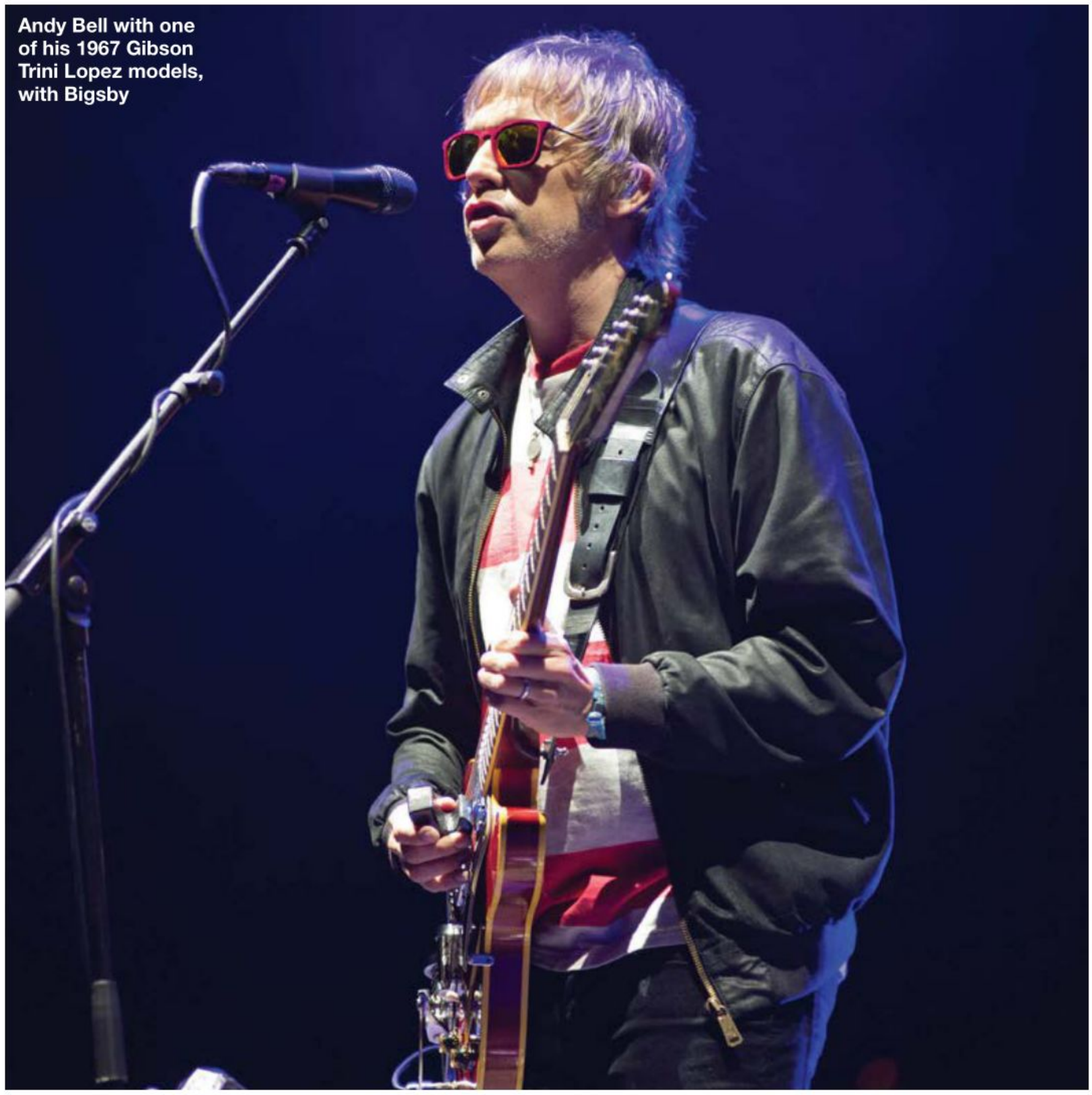
Ride (l to r): Steve Queralt (bass), Andy Bell (guitar, vocals), Mark Gardener (guitar, vocals), Laurence Colbert (drums)

the fans. The Glasgow Barrowlands gig was a particularly emotional evening. "It was simply amazing. I always loved Barrowlands; it's one of the best venues in the world to play in, and one of the best crowds as well. It's always good to be there connecting that music with people again – we weren't sure if it was going to go off in the same way, you've got to take into account everyone is getting a bit older, even the fans. We had a healthy amount of older and younger fans going for it, it's been wicked."

Ride's more recent visit to the city as special guests of Mogwai found them filling the 13,000 capacity Hydro with their familiar wall of sound and psychedelic noise. "That was mindblowing, I've seen Mogwai before while we were doing reunion dates. We did some festivals and I saw them in some faraway hot country, which was weird, because you want to be seeing them in the cold. So to play with them in Glasgow with a home crowd and this incredible sound system was amazing. They are such a great band and just the bass sound alone was enough to send you into a coma of pleasure. It was great to be invited by them, because there's definitely a thread of music and influence that's gone through and I missed them when they came out in the 90s, around the time we were finishing."



Andy Bell with one of his 1967 Gibson Trini Lopez models, with Bigsby

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Weather Diaries is Ride's first album since 1996's _Tarantula_

It was in the last breath of that decade that Bell joined Oasis on bass and remained with the band for a 10-year stint until their eventual split in August 2009. Notably, he contributed album and set-opener *Turn Up The Sun* from the band's *Don't Believe The Truth* album in 2005. Their final LP, *Dig Out Your Soul*, a decade ago, was a dark slice of psychedelic rock 'n' roll which also featured Bell's *Nature Of Reality*.

"It's a song I like a lot," he says. "It was conceived almost as a White Stripes thing, with the guitar riff, drums and vocals. The guitar riff contains the bassline, in a way – it was meant to be very simple, elemental and loud like that. I don't know whether we captured it that way and it maybe became more full sounding on the recording, the song itself was kind of was me stating my atheist case. I really liked that

"WE HAD A HEALTHY AMOUNT OF OLDER AND YOUNGER FANS, IT'S BEEN WICKED"

album. It was done at Abbey Road – the coolest memory was a Monday morning. Over the weekend, Noel had written three tunes and all of them ended up being on the record. He had *Falling Down* and two others. We sat there while having cups of tea as Noel banged out drums, bass, guitars and vocals on three tracks.

"The whole thing took him a couple of hours, and he put down working versions of three tunes that ended up being on the album, it was one of those special moments you look back on. That remix of *Falling Down* [by Amorphous Androgynous] is brilliant – it's about 20 minutes long, with lots of meandering sections, it's a great listen and I still play it." For now, a reinvigorated Ride continue to be a going concern. "We're taking it as it comes, we just had a cool trip to Japan and it was my first time in China. We're still touring *Weather Diaries* at mainly festivals now and beyond that, we'll see how we feel. I love being in the band, it's a really cool time in my life."

Ride's _Weather Diaries_ album is out now on Wichita Records. For tour dates and more info, see www.thebandride.com

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GEAR REVIEWS

Summer is just around the corner, and whether it's going on holiday, going to a festival, or just enjoying the mild evenings outside, it seems like the summer is built for acoustic guitars. And if yours needs an upgrade, we've got a selection of affordable options from Eastman, PRS and Faith for you to try this month. Keeping things airy, the TV Jones Spectra Sonic is a godsend for bigger-framed players who want to get in on the Gretsch-y chambered solidbody game. Finally, we're keeping things current with some none-more-trendy mini-effects from MXR and Dunlop, and home recorders need to check out the clever and affordable Two Notes Torpedo Captor – it could change the way you record amps at home forever…

TV Jones Spectra Sonic Supreme **84**
The pickup guru returns to electric guitar making

Eastman E1P-LTD, E100-LTD & E100SS-LTD .. **88**
Three new limited edition small-bodied acoustics

PRS SE T40E **92**
An impressive and affordable new acoustic from the US

Faith Legacy Mars, Earth & Neptune **96**
Three electros that pay homage to Patrick James Eggle

MXR Sugar Drive Mini & Classic 108 Fuzz Mini **100**
Jeorge Tripps brings his skills to the mini-pedal world

Jackson Audio Prism **104**
The boutique amp builder enters the effects market

Mythos Chupacabra **106**
A hand-made fuzz/overdrive inspired by ZZ Top

Two Notes Torpedo Captor **109**
Clever new tool for recording, attenuation and emulation

Dunlop Cry Baby Mini 535Q **110**
The scaled-down Cry Baby gets some clever new tricks

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TV JONES
SPECTRA SONIC SUPREME

TV Jones is a renowned pickup maker, but the American company is no slouch when it comes to electric guitar design, either. Chris Vinnicombe takes the Spectra Sonic for a spin…

TV Jones is a brand name synonymous with aftermarket reproductions of vintage Gretsch pickups, but the company – headed up by Thomas V Jones – is responsible for a line of electric guitars, too. Hang on a minute, though… doesn't the Spectra Sonic Supreme look a little familiar? That'll be because the design has been around for a while.

Back in 2000, taking inspiration from a Kay Tuxedo that someone had brought to him for repair, Jones collaborated with the Gretsch company and Brian Setzer's guitar tech Rich Modica on a line of Spectra Sonic instruments that included a six-string electric, a 'C Melody' baritone and a four-string bass model. Although early Spectra Sonics were manufactured Stateside in the Hamer factory, production quickly shifted to Japan. However, by the end of 2005, the Spectra Sonic was dropped from the Gretsch catalogue altogether.

Happily, the story didn't end there, with Jones taking up the baton following the end of his licensing agreement with Gretsch. Production continues today in the respected Terada factory in Japan in which many Gretsch-badged guitars are still made. All new Spectra Sonics are shipped back to the US and set up by TV Jones before leaving his facility, which was previously in California but is now near Seattle.

The Supreme is joined in the range by a Standard model with a more stripped-down aesthetic. TV Jones Spectra Sonics have been available direct from the company for some time but they are now much easier to get hold of in the UK thanks to The North American Guitar in Hoxton. Time to remind ourselves of what all the fuss is about…

IN USE

With its chambered alder body and maple top the Spectra Sonic Supreme weighs a healthy but manageable 8.2lbs. The body width of 15.25 inches means that it's on the large side but it certainly doesn't feel unwieldy and it balances superbly when strapped on. Those of us with larger frames will appreciate the extra girth – it's nice to play a guitar without f-holes that doesn't look like a ukulele when worn by a tall person!

As the bridge posts are screwed into the top and the neck join is rather Les Paul like in construction, there's more of a low-profile feel here than you'd typically get from a vintage-style Gretsch. The Spectra Sonic is very player friendly as a result – throw in a comfortable, medium-depth maple neck that sits in the 'just right' zone for the vast majority guitarists and it's a compelling proposition.

Unplugged there's a balanced response with a lovely, complex high-end and long sustain from open chords. Fire up your amp, dial in lashings of spring reverb, fret some spacey chord shapes, give that arm a gentle wobble and listen to those shifting harmonics. The Spectra Sonic Supreme is a guitar on which you can play fewer notes yet somehow fill more space and sound better in the process.

Although an ABR-1 bridge isn't everyone's first choice in combination with a Bigsby, the brass-saddled unit here works superbly well in practice. Aided by that slippery Delrin nut, even with a robust right-hand approach to the B12's whammy bar, the tuning remains stable with the supplied set of D'Addario 0.010 to 0.046 strings. The B12 is a lesser-spotted member of the Bigsby family, but performance is very similar to a B7, the one practical advantage being that the strap button sits proud of the hinge plate rather than low in a cutout, so attaching your strap is less of a faff.

THERE'S A BALANCED RESPONSE WITH A LOVELY, COMPLEX HIGH-END AND LONG SUSTAIN FROM OPEN CHORDS

When comparing the Spectra Sonic to our 2013 Gretsch Center Block Panther fitted with High Sensitive Filter'Tron pickups and

KEY FEATURES

TV Jones Spectra Sonic Supreme

- **PRICE** £2,295 (inc hard case)
- **DESCRIPTION** Chambered single-cutaway electric guitar. Made in Japan
- **BUILD** Maple top, chambered alder body, set maple neck with 12" radius bound ebony fingerboard with custom TV Jones 'shoestring potato' fret markers, 22 medium frets and Delrin nut
- **HARDWARE** Bigsby B12 vibrato tailpiece, Tokiwa ABR-1 bridge with brass saddles, Sperzel tuners
- **ELECTRICS** 2x TV Jones TV Classic humbucking pickups, CTS 500k master volume and tone with 0.022 uF cap, Switchcraft 3-way toggle pickup selector
- **SCALE LENGTH** 24.625"/625mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 43.2mm at nut, 52.7mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 21.0mm at first fret, 24.1mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 35.5mm at nut, 50.7mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 8.2lb/3.7kg
- **FINISH** Ice Blue Metallic nitrocellulose (as reviewed), Charcoal Black, Cobalt Blue, Scarlet Red
- **CONTACT** The North American Guitar 0207 835 5597 **thenorthamericanguitar.com** **www.tvjones.com**

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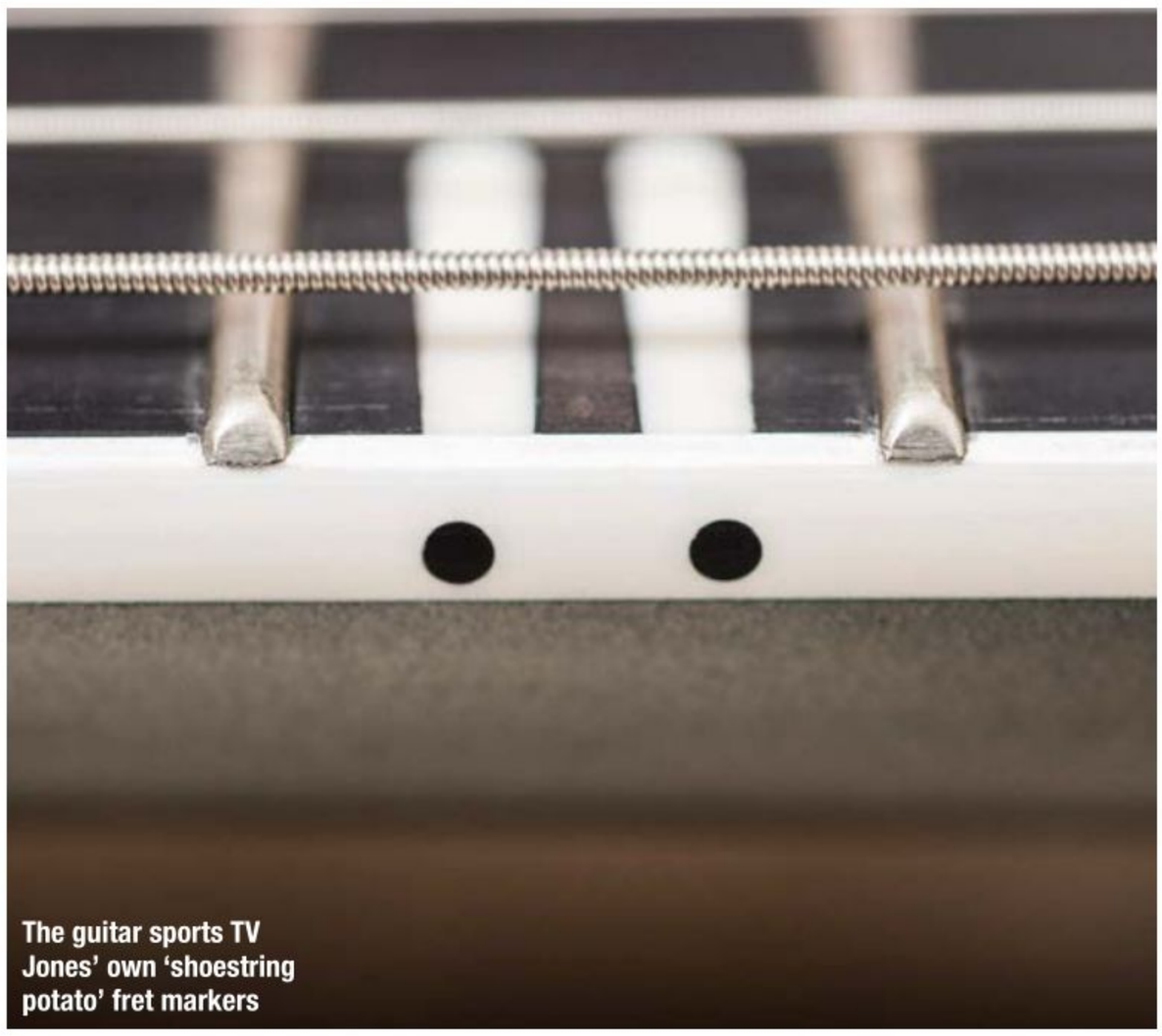
TV Jones guitars are made in the same Terada factory that has produced many high-end Gretsch instruments

The Spectra Sonic pairs its Bigsby with the unusual choice of an ABR-1 bridge, but it works well in practice


The guitar sports TV Jones' own 'shoestring potato' fret markers

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Godin's **Montreal Premiere LTD** (**£1,949**) also features a pair of TV Jones Classic pickups and simplified controls. The **Gretsch G6118T Players Edition Anniversary** (**£2,259**) is a two-tone hollowbody with modern tweaks such as a String-Thru Bigsby and locking tuners

manufactured in the same Terada factory, the Gretsch's voice proves thicker and throatier. The Spectra Sonic has an extra layer of glistening high-end harmonics and offers a slightly more comfortable ride in higher registers when it comes to playability. That said, high bends on the plain strings still have that slightly plinky, fast decay akin to tapping the keys on the cobweb-covered upper reaches of an old piano. It's all part of the vibe!

Overall, the Spectra Sonic experience is much more like playing a scaled up Jet than something like a Falcon or 6120, and that includes how it responds when you add some gain into the mix. When played with overdrive, that high-end sparkle and definition helps to stop chords turning into mush when you cruise past Malcolm Young and in to Billy Gibbons territory.

COMPARED TO A GRETSCH PANTHER, THE SPECTRA SONIC HAS AN EXTRA LAYER OF GLISTENING HIGH-END HARMONICS

As long as lead acrobatics aren't your bread and butter, for retro-pop, roots, indie or raunchy rock 'n' roll the Spectra Sonic Supreme delivers the goods and looks fantastic in the process. Inevitably a guitar with so much Gretsch in its DNA invites you to travel down familiar roads when it comes to playing style, but the elegant simplicity and refined nature of the Spectra Sonic design give the guitar its own identity. 'That Great Gretsch Tone' in technicolour? You'd better get hip to it, daddy-o.

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Very neat build
+ Low-profile, well-balanced playing experience
+ Widescreen, high-definition tones

– Look elsewhere for smooth lead work

A refined, hi-fi take on the classic Gretsch experience from one of the brand's preeminent aficionados

8/10

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EASTMAN E1P-LTD, E100-LTD & E100SS-LTD

All-solid tonewoods, bone appointments, nitrocellulose finish and Fishman electronics may seem like high-end stuff, but each of these guitars costs under a grand. Huw Price heads east...

The idea for this limited edition range of parlor guitars came from that most relatable of places – a desire to not let something that's good go to waste. You see, Eastman usually uses Sitka spruce for its 00-sized guitars, but the musical instrument giant found that it had stocks of Adirondack spruce that weren't large enough for dreadnoughts and grand auditorium models. Rather than discard the wood, the company instead decided to produce a limited run of 00 models using the Adirondack, and a total of 130 will be made for each model.

The desire to promote sustainable use of wood carries on to the finish of these guitars – acoustic tops are graded for looks as well as tap tone and some perfectly good wood gets wasted when the grain is deemed too wonky or the colour is inconsistent. Obviously, this not exactly an environmentally sound approach, so rather than waste perfectly good Adirondack spruce, Eastman decided to stain the more cosmetically challenged tops. Consequently, two of our review guitars have a certain dustbowl chic, but one has made the cut for clear natural finish.

We've become accustomed to Eastman's highly individual and genuinely convincing approach to ageing guitar finishes over the last couple of year, but these three guitars still raise our eyebrows when we first get them out of their boxes. Having reviewed the immaculately finished T184MX recently, the near flawless open-pored finish really shouldn't have come as a surprise, but sub-£1,000 guitars getting treated to satin nitrocellulose, as well as bone nuts and compensated saddles, is still unexpected.

SUB-£1,000 GUITARS GETTING TREATED TO SATIN NITRO, COMPENSATED SADDLES AND BONE NUTS STILL RAISES EYEBROWS

All three bodies may appear identical in size and shape on initial inspection, but they're actually subtly different. For instance the E100SS-LTD, which sports the solid headstock, and the natural-topped E100-LTD share the same outline, but the former has a deeper body. Additionally, both bouts of the E1P-LTD are slightly narrower, but its body is fractionally longer with a less pinched waist and it has the same depth as the E100SS-LTD.

Common features between the three guitars include solid mahogany backs and sides, scalloped bracing, open-geared Ping V93N tuners, ebony bridges, bridge pins and peghead overlays with inlayed pearl logos. This is very high quality ebony, with a uniformly black appearance and very few grain lines. Since Eastman is primarily a violin manufacturer, the company buys ebony in such huge quantities that it can get it at very competitive prices and maintain lower retail prices.

All three guitars come with a Fishman Sonitone pickup system. The battery pouch is mounted on the neck block and there's a strap button/output jack on the tail block. Just under the bass side of the soundhole you'll find thumbwheel volume and tone controls.

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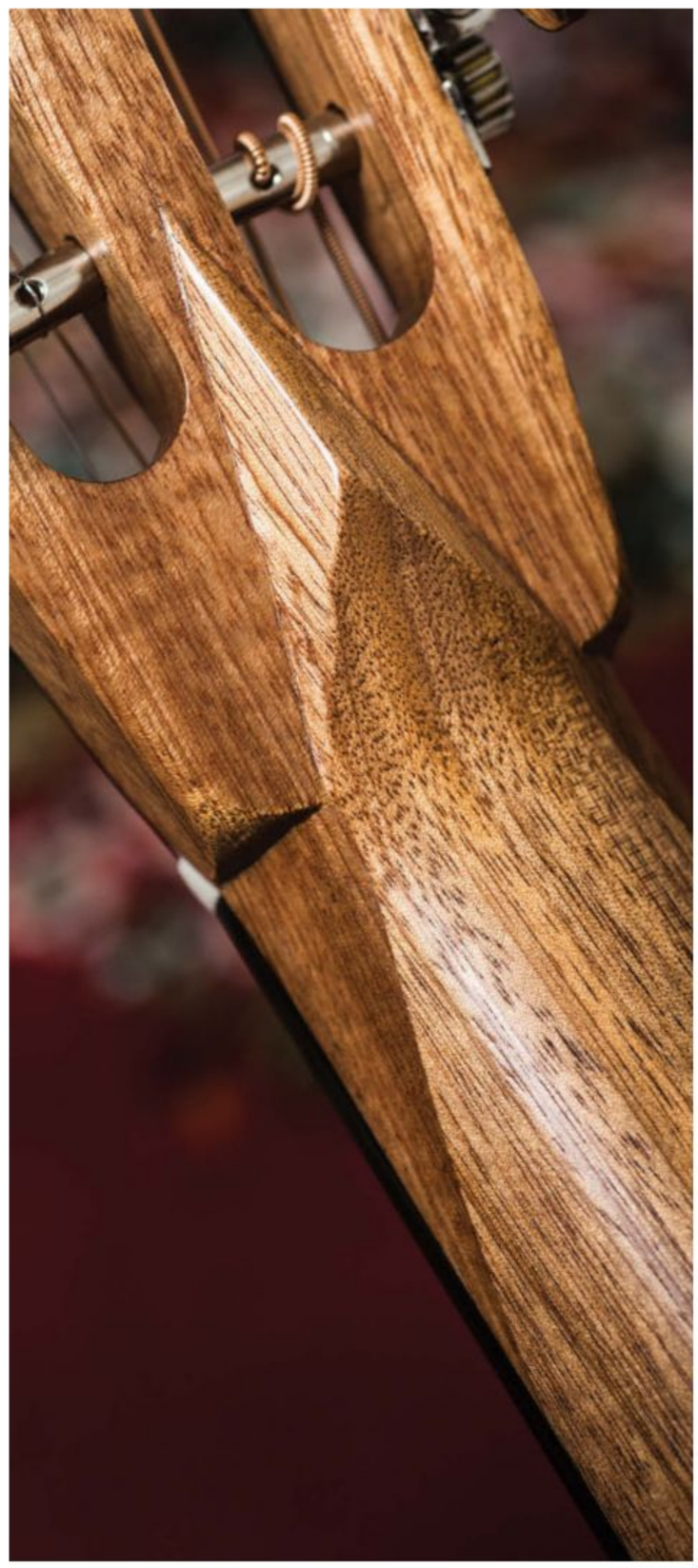

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

All-solid small body alternatives include the **Recording King RP2-626** (**£685**), **Faith Mercury FMSB45-BNC** (**£779**) and the all mahogany **Stanford Old Mommy** (**£747**)

HANDS ON

The first guitar of our trio that we get out of its box is the E1P-LTD, and instantly, its vividly figured mahogany neck sets this model apart. Peeking through the soundhole we see mahogany kerfing with rosewood side braces and finish spayed evenly all over the inside of the back - features that are common to all three guitars.

The E100-LTD is the one guitar of our trio to receive a natural finish, but that's not the only thing that stands out, as the back wood is more highly figured than the rest of the trio. Clearly this will vary from guitar to guitar, because every piece of wood is individual, but here the back plates are cut to create a chevron pattern at the lower bout and allow the curvy stripes to follow the shape of the waist. Like the E1P-LTD, its neck has a subtle V that quickly transitions to a deep D.

Finally, we come to the E100SS-LTD. This model is distinguished by its 14th fret neck join and a solid peghead, while the off-white binding and simplified rosette give it a crisper look than the other two. The soundhole binding appears to be maple, but we think matching off white plastic would have been less trouble and might look better. The heel is solid rather than stacked, and although the headstock is scarf-jointed, the workmanship is such that the join lines are barely visible.

IN USE

Over the years we have become resigned to the near inevitability of black fretting fingers when playing ebony fingerboards on sub-£1,000 guitars. It's the telltale sign that a manufacturer has used stain to disguise lesser quality timber, but all fingers come away clean from these guitars. Better still, the ebony fingerboards are buffed to such a smooth high gloss, the manufacturer had to confirm that the wood is actually bare rather than finished.

The tuners and nut work are uniformly excellent and tuning up is a smooth and silent operation. These guitars are easy to tune, they play in tune and they stay in tune. With the wood, hardware and electronics all identical, this is a rare opportunity to assess how neck joins and subtle differences in body size and shape influence tone.

The E1P-LTD is very much a parlor guitar, albeit a very loud and punchy one. The bass isn't deep, but what's there is solid and defined. String-to-string balance is excellent and the guitar is quick to respond across its frequency range. A solid and very slightly boxy midrange combines with clear but refined treble to provide the E1P-LTD's basic character. For blues, slide and ragtime picking its dry bark is absolutely ideal, but the directness and lack of harmonic colour make it less engaging for rhythm and more ethereal picking styles.

THE E100-LTD HAS A FULL AND DEEP TONE THAT IS TOTALLY DEVOID OF BOXINESS AND HAS REAL COMPLEXITY

Since it's the closest to its sibling in spec, we next move onto the E100-LTD, but the difference is vast. This time we're greeted with a far fuller and deeper tone that is totally devoid of boxiness and way more complex. The treble is a bit softer and the transient response is a little slower, but both contribute to an easier playing experience.

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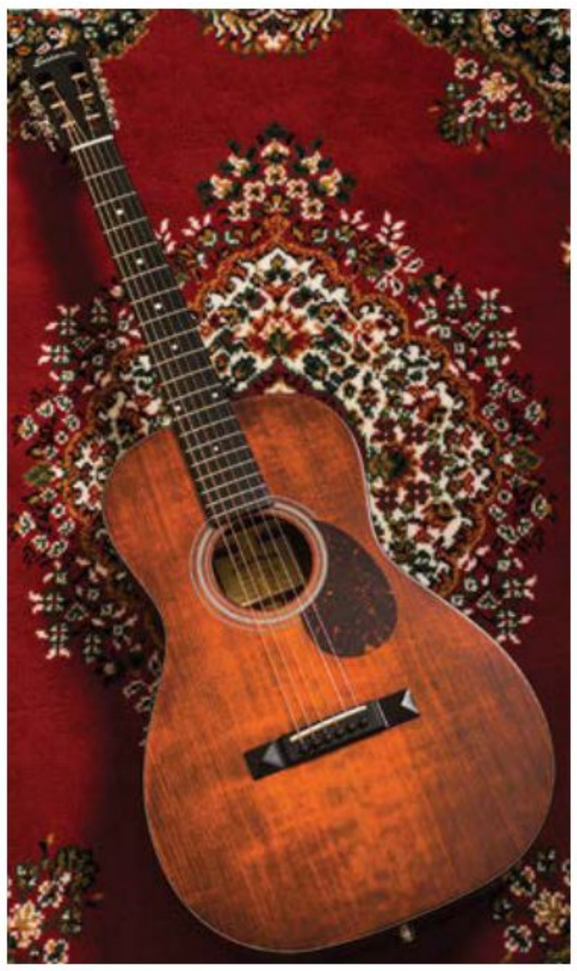
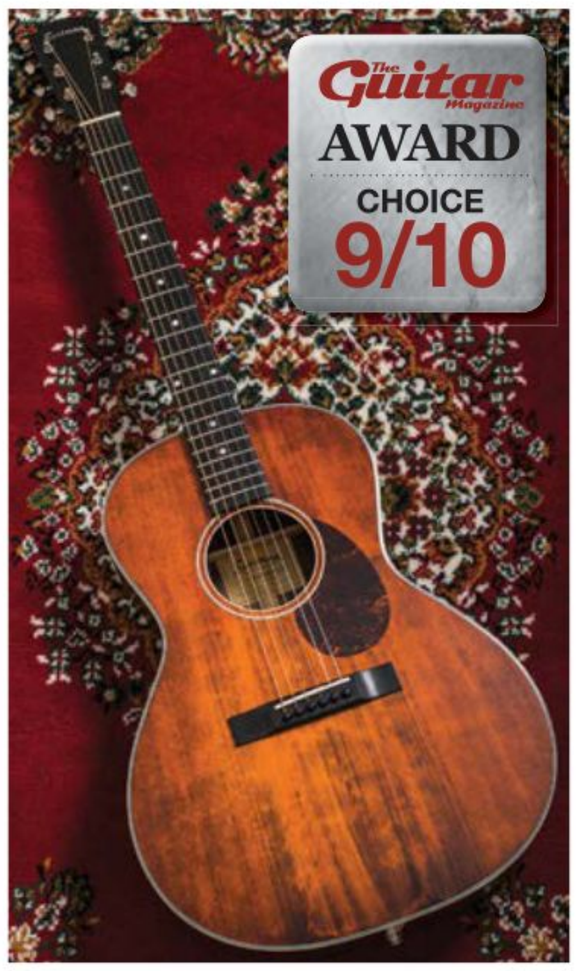
The E100-LTD covers the rootsy, bluesy fingerstyle stuff just as well, but you're not limited to it. There's sufficient depth to drop to D and C tunings without the body running out of puff and the plain strings carry enough weight to compete with open wound string drones. It's equally adept at rhythm duties, effortlessly conjuring mid-70s Dylan and Steven Stills vibes with otherworldly sustain.

With its 14th fret neck joint and rounded C neck profile, the E100SS-LTD feels and sounds rather different to the others. It actually incorporates elements of both, with some of the bright speediness of the E1P-LTD and the depth and fullness of the E100-LTD. Its easily the best for rhythm duties, but it's no slouch for picking either. Like the others it has a distinct retro flavour, but we would hope for some extra woodiness as the spruce matures.

Whenever we see a Fishman pickup installed we tend to think, 'Yeah, that's going to do nicely'. And it's certainly the case here, with pickups capturing some of each guitar's acoustic character to produce very playable, palatable sounds across the board.

Such is the build and sound quality of these guitars, we wouldn't have balked at the price if they were pure acoustics. The fact Eastman has spec'd such a decent one is a very welcome bonus. With only 65 of each of these limited edition models coming to Europe, our advice is don't hang about to snag yourself one while you still can.





KEY FEATURES
Eastman E1P-LTD

- **DESCRIPTION** All-solid 6-string acoustic. Made in China
- **PRICE** £799 (inc gigbag)
- **BUILD** Adirondack spruce top with mahogany back and sides, mahogany neck, ebony bridge, pins, fingerboard & peghead overlay, 12th-fret neck join, open-gear tuners, bone nut & saddle, tortoise binding, dual-action truss rod
- **ELECTRICS** Fishman Sonitone
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **FINISH** Open-pore satin nitrocellulose
- **SCALE LENGTH** 633mm/24.88"
- **NECK WITH** 42mm at nut, 55mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 21.5mm at first fret, 22mm at 9th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 35.5mm at nut, 55mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 4.2lbs/1.9kg
- **CONTACT** Eastman Musical Instruments Europe **www.eastmanguitars.eu**

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Retro blues tone
+ Excellent playability
+ Rock-solid tuning

– Lacks bass depth
– Parlor-style midrange boxiness

It's a bit on the callow side initially, but this guitar is already showing glimpses of lovely bluesy authenticity

8/10

KEY FEATURES
Eastman E100-LTD

- **DESCRIPTION** All-solid 6-string acoustic. Made in China
- **PRICE** £799 (inc gigbag)
- **BUILD** Adirondack spruce top with mahogany back and sides, mahogany neck, ebony bridge, pins, fingerboard & peghead overlay, 12th-fret neck join, open-gear tuners bone nut & saddle, tortoise binding, dual-action truss rod
- **ELECTRICS** Fishman Sonitone
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **FINISH** Natural open-pore satin nitrocellulose
- **SCALE LENGTH** 633mm/24.88"
- **NECK WITH** 42mm at nut, 55mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 21.5mm at first fret, 22mm at 7th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 35.5mm at nut, 56mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 3.9lbs/1.78kg

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Big, complex and deep tone
+ Again, the playability and feel is truly excellent
+ No tuning issues

– Restricted 12th fret access

Already producing a full, warm, deep and rich tone, this guitar will sound extraordinary once it reaches maturity

9/10

KEY FEATURES
Eastman E100SS-LTD

- **DESCRIPTION** All-solid 6-string acoustic. Made in China
- **PRICE** £799 (inc gigbag)
- **BUILD** Adirondack spruce top with mahogany back and sides, mahogany neck, ebony bridge, pins, fingerboard & peghead overlay, 12th fret neck join, open-gear tuners bone nut & saddle, tortoise binding, dual-action truss rod
- **ELECTRICS** Fishman Sonitone
- **LEFT-HANDERS** No
- **FINISH** Open-pore satin nitrocellulose
- **SCALE LENGTH** 628mm/24.75"
- **NECK WITH** 42mm at nut, 55mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 20mm at first fret, 21mm at 7th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 35.5mm at nut, 55mm at bridge
- **WEIGHT** 4lbs/1.8kg

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ A superb all-round small-bodied acoustic
+ Again, the playability is excellent, and the tuning is bang on

– Not quite as full sounding

As it's played in, we expect this model to acquire a woody warmth that will ease it even closer to vintage Gibson tone

9/10

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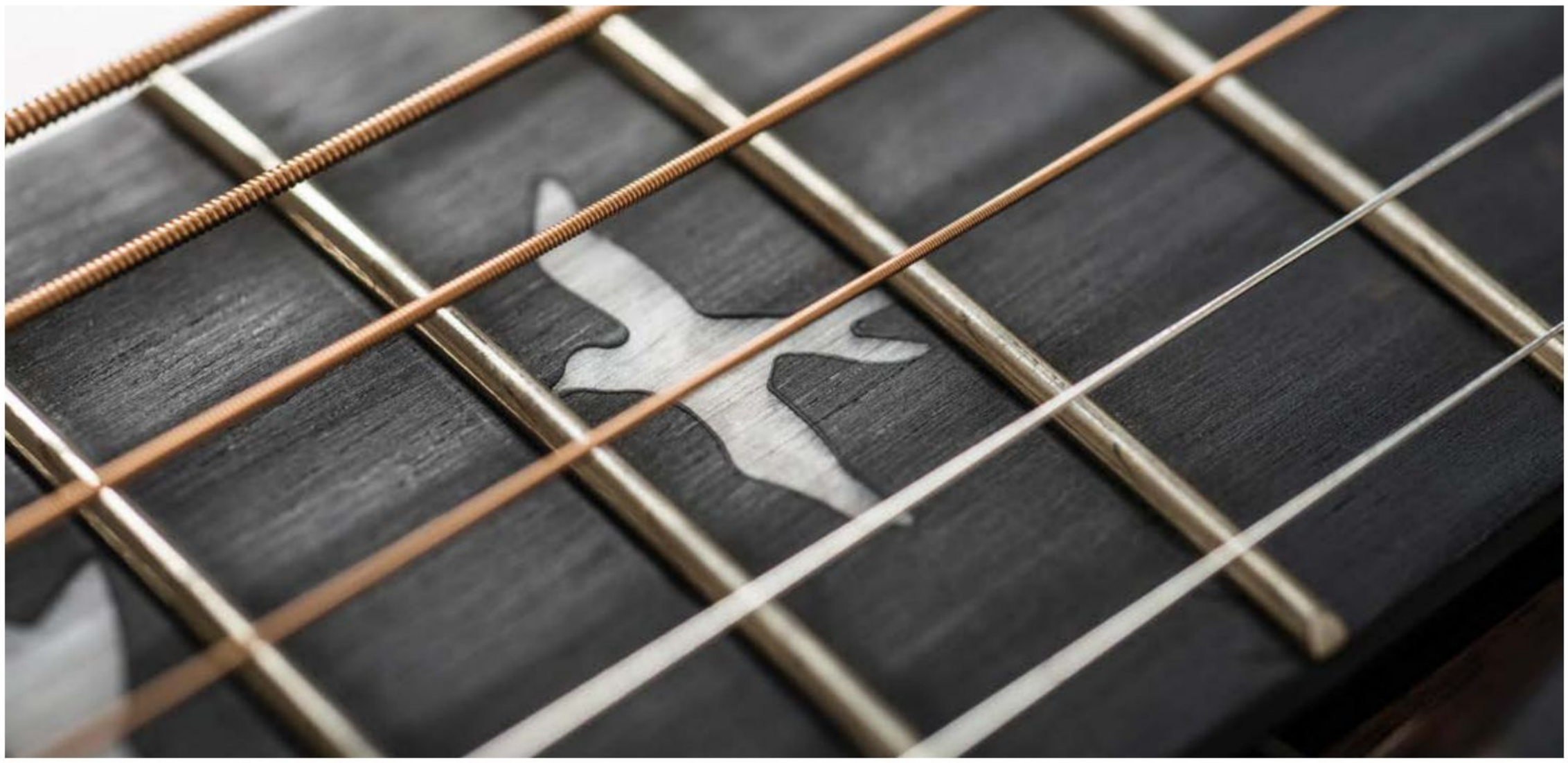

PRS
SE T40E

PRS launches an all-new series of affordable SE electros in an effort to offer something for everyone – and the no-nonsense SE T40E could be an electro for all seasons, as James Stevens reports...

With all the recent mega-hype concerning a certain Mr Mayer's new signature electric guitar, it's easy to overlook the fact that PRS also offers a range of impressive acoustics. At the top end of the scale, the Private Stock consists of a series of sumptuous, lavish guitars usually played only by either 'named' artists, such as Martin Simpson and Tony McManus, or the sufficiently well-heeled, but the more affordable, Chinese-made range of SE guitars has recently been overhauled, with six all-new models.

In so doing, PRS's stated aim is to provide an offering for whatever the acoustic player is seeking from an instrument. To this end, Paul Reed Smith has said: "These are tools to do a job. There are different situations that you would use them in, so we've tried to make these instruments everything they can be for writing, rehearsing, performing, recording, or just trying to unwind at the end of a hard day. They are tools to do a job, and I think they do it all very well."

PRS acoustics come in only one of two body shapes; the Angelus (meaning 'angel'), and the Tonare Grande (meaning 'thunder'). Of the six new models, three are Angelus cutaways, and three are Tonare Grande non-cutaways, but all are loaded with Fishman GT1 electronics. Two of the range (SE AX20E and SE TX20E) come with traditional 'X' bracing, while the remaining four (SE A40E, SE A50E, SE T40E and SE T50E) utilise PRS' hybrid 'X'/classical bracing, which combines the best elements of a classical ladder-bracing system with steel-string 'X'/fan bracing. The physics involved there also permits PRS to better pair resonant tops with stiff, reflective backs and sides.

PRS'S AIM IS TO PROVIDE AN OFFERING FOR WHATEVER THE ACOUSTIC PLAYER IS SEEKING FROM AN INSTRUMENT

The review model we have on test here is the SE T40E, which pairs a solid Sitka spruce top with layered ovangkol – an African relative of rosewood – back and sides. Tonally speaking, ovangkol has a little more midrange than traditional rosewood, while the top end sits beneath the highs attained by a wood such as maple. As a result of this, it stands to reason that ovangkol's deep, rich tone is often a favourite with manufacturers of bass guitars.

MINIMAL BLING

Straight out of the hardcase, the T40E is every inch a PRS. The now ubiquitous PRS headstock sits atop of an ebony fretboard adorned with the company's signature 'birds' inlays. Though famed for unrestrained adornments, this PRS's 'bling' cupboard is pretty bare – just the bird inlays, acrylic body purfling and a modest, matching soundhole rosette.

PRS has clearly chosen to focus on keeping the SRP down to make the guitar as attainable as possible. That said, the Sitka-spruce top is a fine selection. As you might detect from the accompanying photography, the soundboard gives evidence of some 'scarring'. Some, who misunderstand what this actually is, may reject such a guitar due to its perceived 'defects'. In reality, grain markings have zero impact on tone and performance. Rather, they set each guitar apart, giving it a unique look and appeal.

Top and bottom, the T40E is bound with cream-coloured binding that,

The Guitar Magazine AWARD CHOICE 9/10

KEY FEATURES
PRS SE T40E

- **PRICE** £649
- **DESCRIPTION** Solid-topped Tonare Grand electro, made in China
- **BUILD** Solid Sitka spruce electro with laminated ovangkol back and sides, high-gloss finish throughout, and ebony fingerboard and bridge. Chrome enclosed tuners, and bone nut and saddle
- **HARDWARE** PRS enclosed tuners
- **ELECTRICS** Fishman GT1
- **SCALE LENGTH** 5.3"/640mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 43mm at nut, 53.5mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 24.5mm at 1st fret, 37mm at 12th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 36mm at nut, 55mm at bridge
- **FINISH** High gloss throughout
- **OPTIONS** SE range includes AX20E (£599), A40E (£689), A50E (£799), TX20E (£549), and T50E (£749)
- **CONTACT** PRS Europe 01223 874301 **www.prsguitars.com**

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LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

The **Martin 000X1AE** (**£649**) is a solid Sitka spruce top, mahogany-detailed HPL-back-and-sides electro fitted with the Fishman Sonitone pickup system. The **Takamine GN90CE Nexus** (**£649**) is made with a solid-spruce top and layered Ziricote back and sides and loaded with a TK-40D preamp. The **Yamaha FG-TAVT** (**£676**) features a solid-spruce top with laminate mahogany back and sides, featuring the System 70/SRT piezo which includes a Chorus effect control

when set against the rich, dark hue of the ovangkol, creates a striking look.

The two-piece mahogany neck is a fairly chunky profile described by PRS as Wide Fat. For players who prefer a slimmer profile, the T40E's neck will take a little getting used to and might, at first, prove a little taxing. But 'fat' necks have increased inherent stability to them, and the additional mass adds to sustain, so adjusting can reap rewards.

Hardware comes in the form of 20 medium-sized, flawlessly finished frets and enclosed chrome PRS-designed tuners, to which gauge 0.012 to 0.053 strings are fitted. Onboard electronics are handled by the Fishman GT1 Sonitone – an entry-level system, but a popular and capable one. Tone and volume control 'wheels' sit just inside the bass side of the soundhole. The positioning of the controls can make mid-song adjustments tricky, but it does mean that someone hasn't had to take a jigsaw to the shoulder and make a cut out for a control panel.

At the base of the T40E, just below the strap button, is the housing for the nine-volt battery, which will need changing every 100 hours or so. Should that moment arrive while on stage, the battery compartment's location means changing can take place while standing with a strap. It's a pet hate of ours when guitars need to be taken off, and the strap removed, just to change a battery.

Looking closely at the guitar, it's hard not to be impressed with the overall presentation and finish. Everything is clean and tidy, and the guitar feels solid and robust. If we were to be hyper-critical, you could accuse the gloss finish of being a little too thick. Particularly with the neck being on the larger side, we would have preferred to see a satin finish to make darting around the fretboard a little easier.

That said, the T40E has a genuine feel of being equally at home being gently strummed on the sofa, on stage for an open-mic night, or plugged into an audio interface for home recording duties.

VOLUME AND SUSTAIN ARE EXCELLENT AND, WITH PRS'S SUPERB SETUP, THIS IS A VERY ENJOYABLE GUITAR TO PLAY

IN USE

With medium pick in hand, we begin with some basic first-position chords. Straight away, the ovangkol shows evidence of why it's often used in the construction of bass guitars, as mentioned before. The T40E offers a lush, plump bass response – not dissimilar to black walnut, but with a little more in the midrange.

The levels of volume and sustain are excellent and, with PRS's ever-superb factory setup, the T40E is a very enjoyable guitar to play. We noticed, too, that the T40E responds particularly well to alternate tunings. Taking the sixth (bottom E) string down a tone to D really opens up a treasure chest of deep overtones and tonal nuances.

Plugging the T40E into an acoustic amp with the controls set flat, the T40E performs admirably. The Tone control offers a considerable amount of 'colour' and, although not the most versatile pickup system on the market, the Sonitone is more than capable for most duties.

For those familiar with the way Paul Reed Smith approaches guitar making, you'll be aware that his philosophy is all about the instrument being 'subtractive', meaning that everything on the guitar isn't adding more tone, or sustain, it is just subtracting less. In essence, that means that anything that touches the strings has the ability to subtract more sustain or tone from your guitar. In interviews, Mr PRS speaks of putting 6.0 in with the goal of getting 5.8 out. To that end, PRS guitars are fitted with high-quality, tonally responsive materials for the best possible sound. We'd suggest that, even at this modest price point, the SE T40E adheres to that ethos, and is well worth a test drive soon.

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ High standard of build quality and materials
+ Classic, clean and uncomplicated looks
+ Excellent tonal performance, both acoustically and plugged in

– High-gloss, 'full fat' neck profile won't be to everyone's liking

The SE T40E is a good-looking, all-round-capable guitar suitable for a wide range of disciplines and venues. With change out of £650, we'd suggest that the T40E is going to prove very popular

9/10

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Fender Bassman 135 (Silver Face)
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Alvarez AP66E Parlour Electro-Acu
Finished in Sunburst with Slotted Headstock. Built in B-Band Pickup System. Solid Mahogany Top. Fantastic condition.

Fender 1983 Std Stratocaster
'Dan Smith era'. Upgraded Tone Controls. Great condition. More information and photos online. Original Hard Case.

Fender 1993 Stratocaster Plus Deluxe
Finished in Crimson Burst. Roller Nut. Lace Senor Pickups. Comes with original case, tags, documents and strap. Photos online.

Gibson 1934 Original Jumbo Reissue
Rare! Only 100 ever made! Circa 2003/04. Based on a 1934 model owned by Gary Burnett. With Hard Case. Info & Photos Online.

Martin GPCPA4 Shaded
Grand Performance. Sitka Spruce Top. Sapele Back & Sides. Fishman F1 Analog Pickup System. With Martin Hard Case.

Gretsch G6120-59LTV QM LTD
The '59 Gretsch 6120 Chet Atkins. Featuring trestle bracing, dual TV Jones® Classic humbucking pickups. With Hard Case.

Fender Kingman ASCE v3
Electric feel in an Electro Acoustic Guitar. Fishman Pickup. Solid Spruce Top & Solid Mahogany Back & Sides. With Hard Case.

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Electro Acoustic Guitars..

Martin GPCPA1 Plus - Performing Artist Grand Performance - Hard Case - New - **£2,999**
Martin DRSGT - Dreadnought Road Series - All Solid Wood - Hard Case - New - **£1,029**
Martin GPCPA4 - Grand Concert - Great Condition - Hard Case - Photos Online - S/H - **£999**
Faith FVHG-Perc - HiGloss Venus Percussive - Two Pickups - Hard Case - New - **£899**
Faith FVHG - HiGloss Venus - Solid Sitka Top - Rosewood Back & Sides - Hard Case - New - **£845**
Martin DRS1 Road Series - All Solid Sapele Top, Back & Sides - Hard Case - New - **£829**
Faith FNCEBMB- Bloodmoon Neptune - All Solid Trembesi Woods - Hard Case - New - **£799**
Martin GPCX1RAE - X Series - Sitka Spruce Top - Fishman Pickup - New - **£775**
Fender PM-1 Deluxe - Dreadnought - All Solid Woods - Sunburst - Hard Case - New - **£699**
Martin 00LX1AE - X Series - Sitka Spruce Top - Fishman Pickup - New - **£899**
Martin DM1AE - X Series - Sitka Spruce Top - Fishman Pickup - New - **£649**
Martin 00X1AE - Sitka Spruce Top - Fishman Pickup with USB - New - **£649**
Fender PM-2 Standard - Parlor Size - All Solid Wood- Hard Case - New - **£575**
Faith FKVMG Naked Venus - All Solid Mahogany - Built in Pickup - New - **£539**

Acoustic Guitars..

Martin 000-18 Standard - Sitka Spruce Top Mahogany Back&Sides - Hard Case - New - **£2,299**
Martin 000-15M - All Mahogany - Satin Finish - Hard Case - New - **£1,499**
Martin 000-15 Special - Solid Sitka Top Solid Mahogany Back&Sides - Hard Case - New - **£1,450**
Martin LX1 Little Martin - Solid Sitka Spruce Top - Padded Gig Bag - New - **£429**
Martin LXM Little Martin - High Pressure Laminate - Padded Gig Bag - New - **£399**
Martin LX Black Little Martin - High Pressure Laminate - Padded Gig Bag - New - **£399**

Electric Guitar Amplifiers..

Top Hat King Royale 35 - 35 watts 2x12" Combo Amplifier - Circa 2004 - S/H - **£1,499**
Fender Super Sonic 22 - 22 watts 1x12" Combo Amplifier in Black - New - **£1,257**
Vox AC30 C2 - 30 watts All Valve 2x12" with Greenback Speakers - New - **£925**
Blackstar Artist 30 - 30 watts All Valve 2x12"- With Blackstar Padded Cover - New - **£849**
Blackstar HT Soloist 60 - 60 watt 1x12" All Valve Combo - Two Channels - New - **£679**
Blackstar HT Club 40 - 40 watt All Valve 1x12" Combo - Two Channels - New - **£629**

Bass Guitars..

Fender Custom Shop Jaco Pastorius Tribute Relic'd Bass - Hard Case - S/H - **£3,250**
Fender Custom Shop Relic '64 Jazz Bass - Circa 1999 - Hard Case - S/H - **£2,499**
Fender Jaco Pastorius Signature Jazz Bass - Hard Case - New - **£2,159**
Fender American Professional Precision Bass - Black - Hard Case - New - **£1,525**
Fender American Professional Jazz Bass - Sonic Grey - Hard Case - New - **£1,525**
G&L USA JB-2 - Jazz Style Bass - 3 Tone Sunburst - Hard Case - S/H - **£999**
Cort Artisan A4 Custom SP - Thru Neck - Spalted Maple Top - New - **£999**
Fender FSR Limited Edition 70s Precision Bass - Natural - Hard Case - New - **£882**
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FAITH LEGACY MARS, EARTH & NEPTUNE £1,229, £1,259 & £1,299

REVIEW

FAITH
LEGACY MARS, EARTH & NEPTUNE

Paying homage to three Patrick James Eggle models, Faith Guitars launch the Legacy Series, comprising of three special electros. James Stevens takes a look...

Patrick James Eggle is without doubt one of the most respected guitar-builders in the UK, if not the world. Although producing guitars under his own name for some 30-plus years, he has long been associated with Faith Guitars. His influence over design, tonewood choice, quality control and setup has resulted in Faith's undeniable reputation for producing high-quality guitars at a wide range of price points.

Recent times, however, has seen Eggle switch from acoustic to focus on electric guitars. In an effort to ensure that his work remains on the radar, however, Faith has released the PJE Legacy Series of guitars. Each of the three models in the range are based on Eggle models. The Legacy Mars is a drop-shouldered Dreadnought based on the PJE Kanuga. The Legacy Neptune is described by Faith as a 'baby jumbo', akin to the PJE Saluda, while the Legacy Earth is a cutaway Orchestra Model. This particular model is a new body shape for Faith and harks back to the PJE Linville (which, in this reviewer's opinion, was the best guitar Eggle ever made).

Though each model has a distinct body shape, there's much commonality across the range: so let's first look at the features the stablemates share. All three guitars are constructed with solid African Khaya mahogany back and sides, with torrefied Canadian Sitka-spruce tops. First employed by the Vikings, torrefaction, or torrefaction as its sometimes referred to, is the process where wood is baked or roasted in a controlled environment to replicate the natural aging process wood goes through over time. As wood ages, individual cells lose their ability to retain moisture – which is why a guitar from, say, the 1930s, is much lighter and vibrant than a newer guitar. The 'drier' wood is more able to vibrate, has far more resonance, and offers a more mellow, mature tone as a result.

Other common features include a C-shape mahogany bolt-on neck, natural bone nut, saddle and bridge pins, flamed-maple binding and Macassan figured-ebony fingerboard, headplate, bridge and pickguard (the first time Faith has offered a pickguard-fitted guitar!). The Legacy series also boasts abalone soundhole rosettes, and Grover 18:1 nickel-plated tuners with ebony buttons.

THE LEGACY REINFORCES FAITH'S REPUTATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL STANDARDS OF BUILD, FINISH AND PRESENTATION

All the bodies have a high-gloss lacquer finish, 45mm nut width and are loaded with a Fishman Flex Blend pickup system, which combines an under-saddle pickup and condenser mic. Finally, the Legacy series comes with an impressive ABS, carbon-fibre-effect deluxe hardcase finished with scarlet-red lining and five clasps (one lockable).

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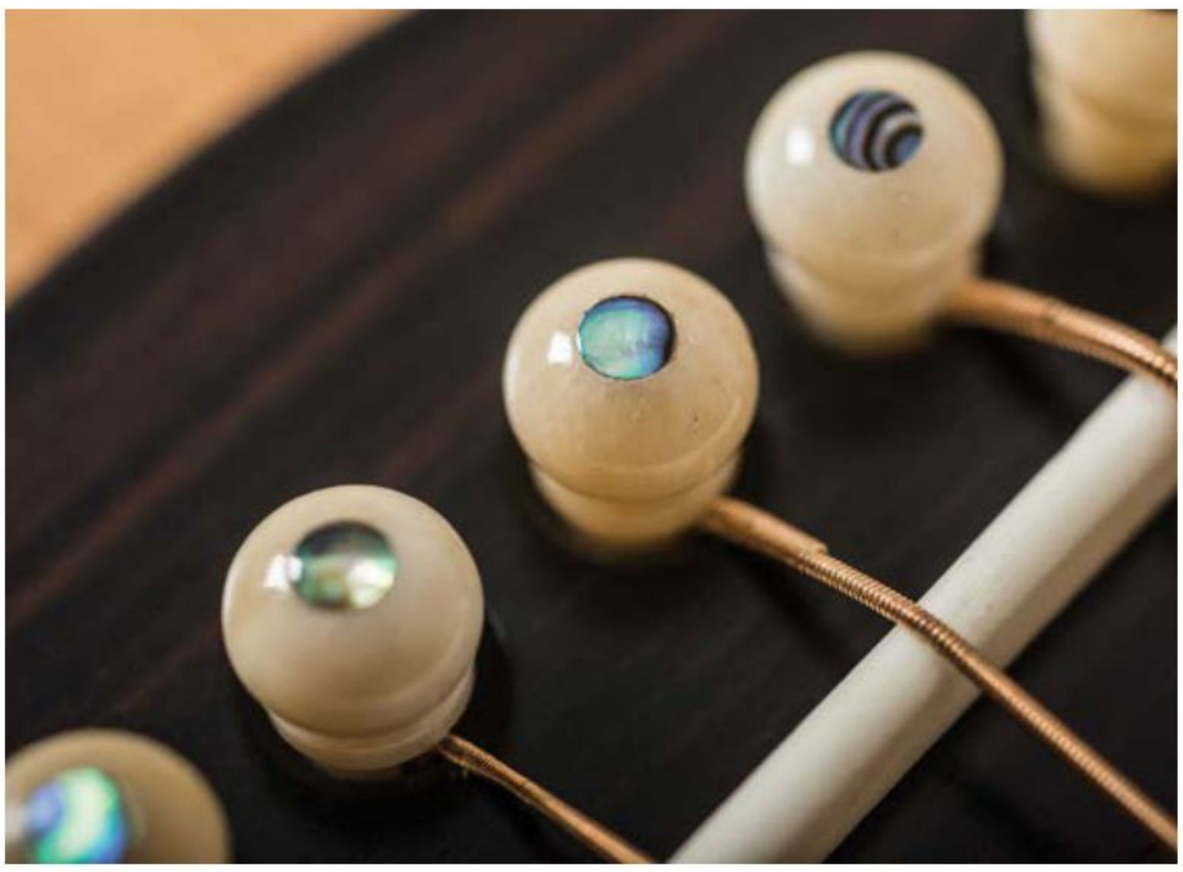
FAITH LEGACY MARS, EARTH & NEPTUNE £1,229, £1,259 & £1,299
REVIEW



LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

The **Gibson Montana J-15** (**£1,499**) is a Sitka-spruce slope-shouldered dreadnought finished in an antique natural finish and fitted with a LR Baggs Element pickup system. The **Taylor 214ce** (**£1,259**) is a Grand Auditorium body size, constructed from Sitka spruce and layered koa, loaded with the award-winning Expression System 2 pickup. The **Martin GPCRSGT** (**£1,099**) is a Grand Performance body from Sitka spruce and sapele, equipped with a Fishman Sonitone system

HANDS ON

Inspecting each model more closely, we're impressed with the grade of respective tonewoods used. The African Khaya mahogany has a slightly tighter grain than the Indonesian mahogany usually used on Faith models. The tighter grain means increased stiffness, and therefore the back and sides can be machined a touch thinner, increasing the body's ability to resonate. The Sitka-spruce top is also a high grade, with a ruler-straight grain. We particularly like the golden hue the torrefaction process has given the tops. The Legacy reinforces Faith's existing reputation for exceptionally high standards of construction, finish and presentation. Inside and out, each guitar here on review is immaculate. Frets are flawlessly finished, joints are tight and clean, and we're particularly impressed with the quality of the all-gloss finish which, although perhaps a tad thick for some, is as good as any guitar at this price point.

In terms of their looks, the guitars are obviously very similar. Clean, slick lines give a contemporary feel – particularly so with the two cutaway models. The Mars Dreadnought, however, is an intriguing marriage of old and new, as we've become accustomed to slope-shouldered Dreads most often having a vintage, pre-war feel. The modern-day presentation combines well with the slope-shoulder form.

IN USE

Again, staying with the commonality the models share, Legacy-series

THE DREADNOUGHT HAS THE BEEFIEST OUTPUT. FULL OF DEPTH AND BOTTOM END, THE MARS IS A STRUMMER'S DELIGHT

As mentioned, the onboard electrics come in the form of the Fishman Flex Blend system, which couples an under-saddle pickup with an internal condenser microphone – the respective signals from each can be blended together. The three rotary controls for the system are fitted to the upper shoulder: tone, blend and volume. Pressing and holding the volume control engages the chromatic tuner, at which point, the signal is muted. The Flex Blend is a good system and we like the fact that the guitar doesn't need to be plugged in for the tuner to be engaged. We also appreciate that the backlight of the tuner switches from blue to green once correct pitch is achieved – a handy feature for dimly-lit stages.

guitars have a low-action setup – very low, in fact. The guitars are just on the right side of buzzing – electric players will feel particularly at home here. The guitars' setup is great for normal, everyday strumming and fingerpicking, but if you dig in and push, you can get a 'zing' and 'snap' from the guitars, which, if handled right, can be a welcome addition to the tonal options. When plugged in, the Fishman Flex Blend is a capable and versatile system. The tone control provides enough variation to be really useful, but we'd have liked

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to see some markings or a centre indentation on the rotaries. If you're the type of musician that just sets everything to 10 and goes, it's no problem, but for those that like the variation the controls offer, it's easy to lose where you are.

As you'd expect, the dreadnought has the beefiest output of the trio. Full of depth and bottom end, the Mars is a strummer's delight. The nut width is very marginally wider than a regular dreadnought's dimensions (say, a Martin D-18). Surprisingly, the extra millimetre does feel like it makes a difference, but not so much that it'd put anyone off. It just takes a song or two to adjust your playing. The Earth OM on the other hand produces a timbre from the other end of the tonal spectrum, with precise highs and a sweetness that only comes from medium- and smaller-bodied guitars. When compared to a Martin OM, the Earth has nearly a full centimetre of extra depth; which certainly helps with projection and increased volume. If the Mars dreadnought is for strummers; the Earth OM is more at home with fingerpicking duties, due to its defined, detailed performance.

The Neptune, described as a mini-jumbo in its body size, sits somewhere between its siblings, tonally speaking. Capturing the best of both worlds, the Neptune combines precision with boom, and we'd suggest that this particular model would be well suited to an all-rounder, that is someone who plays a bit of everything and, for this reviewer at least, feels the most versatile and adaptable. The Neptune handles strumming, soloing, choppy riff work and fingerpicking admirably and we'd suggest is the pick of this Legacy bunch.

KEY FEATURES

Faith Legacy Mars

- **PRICE** £1,229
- **DESCRIPTION** All-solid slope-shouldered dreadnought. Made in Indonesia
- **BUILD** High-grade torrefied Sitka-spruce slope-shouldered dreadnought with African Khaya mahogany back and sides, all-gloss finish, and Macassan figured-ebony fingerboard and bridge. Flamed-maple binding, and bone nut and saddle
- **HARDWARE** Grover Rotomatic 18:1 nickel enclosed tuners
- **ELECTRICS** Fishman Flex Blend
- **SCALE LENGTH** 25.6"/650mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 45mm at nut, 55mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 24mm at 1st fret, 80mm at 11th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 40mm at nut, 55mm at bridge
- **FINISH** High-gloss body, satin neck
- **CONTACT** Barnes & Mullins 01691 652449
  www.bandm.co.uk
  www.faithguitars.com

KEY FEATURES

Faith Legacy Earth

- **PRICE** £1,259
- **DESCRIPTION** All-solid orchestra model with cutaway. Made in Indonesia
- **BUILD** High-grade torrefied Sitka-spruce orchestra model with African Khaya mahogany back and sides, all-gloss finish, and Macassan figured-ebony fingerboard and bridge. Flamed-maple binding, and bone nut and saddle
- **HARDWARE** Grover Rotomatic 18:1 nickel enclosed tuners
- **ELECTRICS** Fishman Flex Blend
- **SCALE LENGTH** 25.6"/650mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 45mm at nut, 55mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 24mm at 1st fret, 80mm at 11th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 40mm at nut, 55m at bridge
- **FINISH** High-gloss body, satin neck

KEY FEATURES

Faith Legacy Neptune

- **PRICE** £1,299
- **DESCRIPTION** All-solid cutaway mini-jumbo. Made in Indonesia
- **BUILD** Torrefied Sitka-spruce-topped mini-jumbo cutaway with African Khaya mahogany back and sides, all-gloss finish, and Macassan figured ebony fingerboard and bridge. Flamed-maple binding, and bone nut and saddle
- **HARDWARE** Grover Rotomatic 18:1 nickel enclosed tuners
- **ELECTRICS** Fishman Flex Blend
- **SCALE LENGTH** 25.6"/650mm
- **NECK WIDTH** 45mm at nut, 55mm at 12th fret
- **NECK DEPTH** 24mm at 1st fret, 80mm at 11th fret
- **STRING SPACING** 40mm at nut, 55m at bridge
- **FINISH** High-gloss body, satin neck

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Excellent standard of build quality
+ Clean and simple looks
+ Deep, rich tone perfect for singer-songwriters

– Wider nut might not suit everyone

The Mars is a fantastic slope-shouldered electro dread with contemporary looks, high-grade tonewoods, all wrapped up in a flawless high-gloss finish

8/10

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Stylish, understated looks
+ Top-drawer materials and construction throughout
+ Sweet, precise acoustic tone perfect for fingerstyle playing

– Tone lacks a smidgen of low end

The Earth is a fantastic OM-inspired cutaway electro with a clear and dynamic tone, boasting sweet highs and bags of mids

8/10

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Beautifully presented
+ Modern but modest looks
+ Awesome tone and all-round performance

– Chunky body dimensions might not suit smaller-sized players

The Neptune is a mini-jumbo cutaway electro with sleek lines, excellent build quality, and bags of tone

9/10

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MXR

SUGAR DRIVE MINI & CLASSIC 108 FUZZ MINI

The venerable institution of MXR is keeping it contemporary with its new range of Mini pedals. Richard Purvis weighs up a duo of diminutive dirt machines...

Like the oceans, the mountains and the annoyingness of Piers Morgan, MXR pedals have always existed and always will. To be a little more precise, they've been around since the early 70s, which really is an age in stompbox terms. Greatest hits include the one-knob Phase 90 of 1974, the two-knob Distortion Plus of circa 1979, and more recently, the three-knob (plus a button) Carbon Copy analogue delay. Times change, but MXRs remain user-friendly, solid… and mostly the same size.

But scaled-down stompers are all the rage in 2018, and with Way Huge founder Jeorge Tripps now in charge of design, MXR is not about to be left on a dusty shelf marked 'heritage'. So here we have a sawn-off version of a vintage-voiced fuzz – and first up, an all-new pedal that's following a whole different trend…

SUGAR DRIVE

Normally, if a new pedal is 'inspired by' an old pedal, there'll be a big old clue in the name, or in the colour of the enclosure, or maybe even both. In the case of the Sugar Drive, MXR isn't being quite so brazen – but when you read that this unit is "based on a rare and elusive circuit" with a "mythical reputation", it shouldn't take long for the Klon klaxon to start honking away.

The reasoning is simple: as Mr Tripps told this magazine a couple of months back, "everyone else is doing it" – so here we have a drive that goes from low-gain boost to full-blown distortion, blends the overdriven signal with the clean tone on its way out, and uses a voltage doubler to increase headroom – all the klone essentials. It's got one thing an original Centaur can't offer, though: switchable true or buffered bypass. A bold new twist? Not exactly – you'll find the same feature on Klon's follow-up pedal, the KTR.

THE SUGAR DRIVE MINI HAS ONE THING AN ORIGINAL CENTAUR CAN'T OFFER: SWITCHABLE TRUE OR BUFFERED BYPASS

Controls-wise, it's all reasonably straightforward stuff – well, it could hardly be otherwise with this titchy form factor. You get Volume, tone and drive, with that little buffer switch tucked awkwardly into the side of the enclosure. There's no room for a battery, of course, but a 9V mains adapter is included.

CLASSIC 108 FUZZ MINI

MXR's parent company Jim Dunlop owns the rights to the Fuzz Face, originally sold under the Arbiter name, so there's no need for knowing winks and nudges here. This is a titchified version of the Classic 108 Fuzz, which is itself a squarified version of the silicon-powered evolution of the Fuzz Face, made between the late 60s and late 70s.

Inside, we find a pair of the eponymous BC-108C silicon transistors, and a much simpler circuit board than the Sugar Drive's

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

There are plenty of klones to choose from, but you should probably start your investigations with the **JRAD Archer £175** and **Wampler Tumnus Deluxe (£189)**. For silicon Fuzz Face sounds, try the **Fulltone 70-BC (£145)** or the **Analog Man Sun Face ($185)**, which can be specc'ed with BC-108C transistors.

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– with fuzzes, simplicity is king. Now there are just two controls, for output level and fuzz, plus a buffer switch – not for bypass this time, but for the fuzz circuit itself. This is intended to overcome impedance-mismatch issues with wah pedals.

IN USE

The elusive Klon magic comes from a combination of warm, thickened-up mids and gently softened treble, with a playing feel so touch-sensitive that you can easily forget you're using an overdrive at all. And in basic tonal terms at least, MXR's effort is pretty much there.

Starting with gain around nine o'clock, the actual distortion is barely perceptible on single notes, but the fattening effect on the lower midrange is clear and very likeable. As long as you keep the tone shy of halfway, the Sugar Drive lives up to its name, making lead lines sing out with easy sweetness.

Whack up the gain and things change dramatically: the top end still behaves itself, but now we have a lively, more-or-less transparent mid-gain overdrive that's great for blasting out chords and punchy riffs, especially with single coils.

In a blind shootout with one of the very best klones, the JRAD Archer, the MXR comes mighty close to causing an upset. It's only that supernatural touch sensitivity that proves to be just out of reach: caress the strings like you're stroking a sickly dormouse and it just feels ever so slightly heavy handed. There's also a shade more background hiss, and – with our review sample at least – a bit of a footswitch pop (even from buffered bypass), suggesting some compromises in build quality. Still, there's no denying this is a fine little klone. It's also, lest we forget, very reasonably priced.

The Classic 108 Fuzz Mini is even cheaper, and in some ways even more straightforward; but as it turns out, that switchable buffer makes things a lot more complicated than they first appear.

Leaving the buffer off to begin with, we again start with the dirt control set low… and quickly wish we hadn't, because what comes out is as weak and muddy as a mug of estuary water. It's only with fuzz past four o'clock that this pedal really comes to life, with a smooth and beefy sound that gets brighter as you turn it up towards full. Fully cranked, it goes right to the edge of Velcro buzziness, but still cleans up admirably on the guitar's volume control without undue loss of top end. Now we switch on the buffer, and there's an extra edge to the attack of every note that won't always be welcome; but pull the fuzz back down to around two o'clock, or even lower, and the murkiness that we experienced before is miraculously cured.

And with a wah? Between the buffer switch and the order of the two pedals, there are four different arrangements to explore, and they all sound quite different… but not in the clear-cut good/bad way you might have been led to expect from received stompbox wisdom. For our money, since you ask, wah before fuzz with buffer engaged is the most musical option.

KEY FEATURES
MXR Sugar Drive

- **DESCRIPTION** Overdrive pedal
- **PRICE** £132
- **CONTROLS** Volume, Tone, Drive, true/buffered bypass switch
- **FEATURES** LED for buffered bypass, powered by 9V mains supply only (included)
- **DIMENSIONS** 92x45x55mm

KEY FEATURES
MXR Classic 108 Fuzz Mini

- **DESCRIPTION** Fuzz pedal
- **PRICE** £104
- **CONTROLS** Output level, fuzz, buffer on/off
- **FEATURES** True bypass, powered by 9V mains supply only (included)
- **DIMENSIONS** 92x45x55mm
- **CONTACT** Westside Distribution 0844 326 2000
  jimdunlop.com
  westsidedistribution.com

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Sounds an awful lot like a Klon
+ Good gain range, from clean-ish to a full-on roar

– Can't quite match the responsiveness of a top-class klone
– Doesn't feel as solid as an American-made MXR

A suitably sweet low-gain overdrive that comes very close to the 'mythical' sound

8/10

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Phat fuzz with plenty of sizzle when cranked
+ Switchable buffer gives it a handy kick up the backside

– Most of the action happens right at the top of the fuzz dial
– Can be tricky to balance the controls for clarity

Classic meaty fuzz that cleans up sweetly – just be prepared for some vintage quirks

8/10

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JACKSON AUDIO PRISM

Jackson Audio may be a new name in the pedal world, but the folks behind it have an established pedigree of boutique excellence. Michael Watts walks towards the light...

KEY FEATURES

Jackson Audio Prism

- **PRICE** £259
- **DESCRIPTION** Analogue buffer, boost, preamp EQ and overdrive pedal
- **CONTROLS** Tone, body, boost, pre-gain boost toggle, boost circuit toogle
- **FEATURES** 9V PSU, true bypass, three boost circuits, +/-15dB boost or cut, custom stainless-steel enclosure
- **CONTACT** Jackson Audio **jackson.audio**

Founded in 2010, in Fort Worth Texas, Jackson Ampworks has become synonymous with high-quality boutique amplifiers made entirely in the USA. This new brand – Jackson Audio – is an offshoot company created with the intention of applying the same no-compromise ethos to the design and construction of a range of pedals: the first being the Jackson Audio Prism.

On paper, the Prism is a very versatile unit with a number of subtly different possible applications such as clean boost, FET preamp, transparent overdrive, buffer, amp simulator or any variation thereof. Given the boutique price point, this pedal is clearly aimed squarely at the sort of tonal apex predator who demands only the very best – and there has been an established marketplace for this kind of unit (arguably initiated by Bill Finnegan's Klon Centaur) for decades now, with a wealth of boutique builders vying for the attention of the well-heeled sonic sommelier.

Brad Jackson of Jackson Audio describes the way this pedal functions as being identical to its namesake; splitting the "white light" of your original signal into an array of distinctly beautiful colours. Could this be the cover of *The Dark Side Of The Moon* in pedal form?

The first thing that strikes us upon opening the box is the weight. With a custom-designed stainless-steel chassis, laser-engraved artwork and some of the most rugged construction this reviewer has seen, the Jackson Audio Prism gives off an immediate sense of high-quality build. The smooth-turning knobs and heavy-duty switches offer a reassuring aura of permanence. This is clearly a piece of kit intended for decades of time-zone-straddling world tours… it could conceivably outlive several generations of owners.

The Jackson Audio Prism features a charge pump that converts a nine-volt DC charge to 18 volts for the transparent JFET circuit, active EQ and buffer circuit. Dutifully applying the requisite voltage and assembling an auditioning committee of Gretsch, Gibson, Fender and Supro instruments – featuring Filter'Trons, PAFs, Stratocaster single coils and Vista-Tone pickups respectively – we set about putting the Prism through its paces.

THIS PEDAL IS CLEARLY AIMED SQUARELY AT THE SORT OF TONAL APEX PREDATOR WHO DEMANDS ONLY THE VERY BEST

IN USE

While at first glance, operating the Jackson Audio Prism may seem complicated, the control array is intuitive enough. It's perhaps helpful to think of the Prism in terms of 'threes'. There are three control knobs, three switch-activated gain levels and three 'character' settings. Ignition is made noiseless by the relay-based true-bypass circuitry, with no pops or clicks. Those of us with more complicated pedalboards know the pain of unwanted sonic detritus all too well. With the Prism, we can breathe easy.

Let's look at the tone knobs first. The tone control handles the treble and the body control sculpts the bass response. The largest of the three, the boost knob, will give you a fearsome +/-15dB boost or cut capable of bringing your amp up to full chat very quickly indeed. There's a lot of potential to work with here.

In practice, we found the tone makes the trebles silky and delicious, giving a sophisticated sheen to the gnarliest of sounds (we're looking at you, Supro…) while still retaining character. As with the very best pedals, the body (bass) control works in a way reminiscent of the proximity effect experienced with a high-end cardioid studio microphone, adding depth and presence to the sound without getting muffled.

To the left of the boost knob, we have the first of the Prism's two mini toggle switches. Bearing the legends low, med and high, this is a pre-gain switch that decides how hard the pedal boosts your signal by activating one of three incrementally higher gain levels. Low will get you to x2 unity gain, med covers all bases from clip to crunch, and high gets you where you need to be for tasteful, expressive soloing. Think early-Soldano-meets-Two-Rock levels of

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

Few pedals cover so many bases this well but if you like this then check out the **Vemuram Jan Ray** (**£339**)and the **Tanabe.tv Dumkudo** (**c£200**) for ultra-high quality boosted sounds with the corresponding price tag

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gain, rather than brutal, face-melting distortion here.

While it's not the most important aspect of this pedal, it's worth noting that the LED light changes colour smoothly from white to blue to red depending on the amount of gain you're using, for a visual indication of the current state of affairs. It also – and this is perhaps where it will find its most appreciate audience – looks achingly cool. It has been pointed out, not unfairly, that guitarists as a species often have something of a weakness for shiny things. This is one of those things.

Finally, we have another mini three-way switch that dictates the character of your sound. Your first choice is trans, a completely transparent JFET circuit which leaves the integral timbre of your instrument untouched (it was so clear, in fact, that when we plug in a hand-made Jason Kostal Modified Dreadnought acoustic, the results are nothing less than studio quality).

Next up, we have amp: a MOSFET circuit that, as the name suggests, gives you an amp-like response: the mids become more prominent and there is an extremely authentic valve-style response and feel. Finally, we have the color switch which uses a silicon transistor for a Vox Top Boost sound, very effective indeed for cutting through a band mix. Sonically, the standards are as high as the build quality of this pedal, with a detailed and characterful response across its wide sonic spectrum and a huge amount of tonal versatility.

The Prism is an extremely high-quality pedal that, with its combination of solid tones, encourages you to play better and enjoy the creation of every note to the full. While it's targeted at an increasingly crowded marketplace, this needn't detract from the fact that the Prism is an impressive debut from a new company that lives up to the ethos with which it was founded.

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Great build quality
+ Superb sounds
+ That multi-coloured LED is not just a gimmick

– It's a heavy pedal
– It'd be good to be able to switch between settings with a footswitch

A powerful and high-quality Swiss army knife of a boost pedal that can perform a wide variety of duties in your set-up

8/10

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MYTHOS CHUPACABRA OVERDRIVE/FUZZ £179

REVIEW

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MYTHOS CHUPACABRA OVERDRIVE/FUZZ

Everyone's crazy for a hand-made drive... Michael Watts, *The Guitar Magazine*'s resident sharp-dressed man, fires up this ZZ Top-inspired hotrod...

Established in Nashville in 2010, Mythos Pedals offers a range of hand-made boutique units with a variety of classic sounds (Bluesbreaker, Klon etc), all named after figures and creatures of myth and legend. This new model, the Chupacabra overdrive/fuzz pedal, is directly inspired by the seminal guitar tones committed to tape by early ZZ Top: think the early-to-mid-70s trio *Mud Of The Rio Grande*, *Tres Hombres* and *Fandango!*. Legendary tones indeed – and attempting to capture the raw guitar power of the nascent supergroup in a pedal is no mean feat.

IN USE

The Chupacabra (named after a bear-sized spiny bloodsucking creature from the folklore of the Americas) is extremely simple to use, with two knobs for volume and gain, and a footswitch. At the heart of the beast is a CD4049UBE chip, which makes for a smooth gain progression from pushed boost to overdrive to fuzz as you turn the gain knob. Firing the pedal up, we're greeted by a bright green LED – and with both knobs at 12 o'clock, our clean sound on a Telecaster bridge pickup is noticeably hairier. This is certainly a pushed rather than transparent boost, which stamps its own character on your tone. In some cases, this may be just what you want.

As we add more gain, it becomes readily apparent that the Mythos Chupacabra occupies a sweet spot where overdrive meets fuzz. We've heard this sound in the wild with older tweed amps when they are fully cranked up, but it's relatively rare to find such an authentic reproduction in stompbox form.

HYBRID PICKING THE RIFF TO *LA GRANGE* WITH THE TONE CONTROL OF THE GUITAR BACKED OFF IS INSTANTLY EVOCATIVE

With the gain at 100 per cent, the fuzzier character of the pedal shows its hand. There's no fizziness here; in fact, it's not a high-gain fuzz at all in that sense, being more reminiscent to these ears of a vintage germanium Fuzz Face. Hybrid picking the riff to *La Grange* with the tone control of the guitar backed off a touch produces an instantly evocative sound, which provokes grins all round – and is hands-down one of the best blues-rock rhythm tones we've heard for some time. Adding a Les Paul to proceedings, we crossed the border into *Led Zeppelin II* territory, with some searing low-gain-but-high-impact lead sounds.

The Mythos Chupacabra is a niche pedal intended to cover one part of the tonal spectrum, and it does so very well indeed. It may not be the only overdrive or fuzz pedal you'll ever need, but it's difficult to think of another unit offering these particular tones so convincingly. Other pedals in the Mythos product range cover a huge amount of ground, however, so it's highly probable that when it comes to near-mythical drive, fuzz and boost effects, the company has got you covered.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

As well as the rest of the Mythos range of drives and fuzzes, if you like the cut of the Chupacabra, then check out the **Crowther Audio Hotcake** (£175) – a pro pedalboard stalwart offering usable boost, crunch and grit; or the **Catalinbread Katzenkönig** (£139) which splices the DNA of a Tone Bender with a RAT for filterable drive and fuzz tones

KEY FEATURES

Mythos Chupacabra Overdrive/Fuzz

- **PRICE** £179
- **DESCRIPTION** Hand-made boutique analogue distortion/fuzz pedal
- **CONTROLS** Volume, Gain
- **POWER** 9V external PSU only
- **CONTACT** Andertons 01483 456777 **mythospedals.com** **andertons.co.uk**

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Hand-made boutique quality
+ Authentic vintage blues-rock sounds in the ZZ Top vein
– Some players will demand to have more gain
– Niche appeal

A well-executed niche pedal for an authentic classic-rock vibe

8/10

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TWO NOTES TORPEDO CAPTOR

The Torpedo Captor is a multi-function tool for direct recording, cabinet simulation and attenuation. Huw Price discovers cheap doesn't necessarily mean DSP chips...

French company Two Notes is best known for its highly sophisticated Torpedo cabinet simulator unit and speaker simulator plugin software. Their latest effort is the compact and affordable Captor – a unit that eschews digital modelling and LCD screens for a simpler analogue approach to getting your amp's signal into a mixer or DAW without using microphones.

Around the back of the small metal box, there's an amp input plus speaker thru and attenuated -20dB outputs. On the front panel, an XLR out carries the single onboard cabinet simulation at line level and combines with an out level control and a three-way switch that optimises the tone for guitar or bass – or you can switch off the speaker simulation altogether. A balanced non-speaker simulated jack output also provides raw amp tones and audio pros will appreciate ground lift and phase switches.

Impedance is fixed, but the Captor is available in 4-, 8- and 16-ohm versions. The Captor will run off phantom power but an external centre-negative nine- to 24-volt DC supply can also be used.

IN USE

Used purely as an attenuator, the Captor's fixed 20dB cut provides a substantial amount of attenuation. While it may tame a 100-watt high-gain amp to a sensible gigging level, a 15-watter is reduced to home practice levels. Since the thru output is exactly what it claims, you can plug the Captor's non-attenuated output into an external attenuator. We find the Captor's attenuated tone a little bright and fizzy anyway, so nothing is sacrificed sonically to enjoy a finer degree of control.

While the Captor restricts you to just one speaker simulation, this may not be an issue because it sounds very good. To our ears, it's based on a fairly bright, closed-back cabinet/speaker set-up, with tightly controlled bass and a dry, punchy tone that rock players will certainly enjoy. The bass setting warms and smooths to tone, and we actually prefer it with single coils. If your DAW/interface allows you add EQ, compression, delay and reverb effects to the monitor/recording signal path, it gets even more fun.

IT'S SOLIDLY MADE, AND WHEN INTEGRATED WITH A DAW, IT OPENS UP A WORLD OF QUALITY DIRECT RECORDING POSSIBILITIES

But if that's not to your taste, Two Notes provides two workarounds. The first is the Torpedo CAB stompbox (£359 street) that contains 32 cabinet simulations with optional software control. The second is a free downloadable plug-in called Torpedo Wall Of Sound.

Torpedo Wall Of Sound is compatible with Mac or PC and is compatible with any DAW that will run plugins in AU, VST, RTAS and AAX format. The free download comes loaded with two virtual cabinets, eight microphones and eight power-amp simulations, but entering a unit-specific code that comes with the Captor gives you access to 16 cabinets. There are also various rooms and you can alter 'mic position', add effects and EQ the sound while the Captor works as a load box to silence your amp. If the 16 virtual cabinets aren't enough then more than 150 others are available – you can purchase a permanent license for any extras you want for €8 each.

Combined with the Torpedo Wall Of Sound, the overall theme is very similar to UA's OX, but the processing is done by your computer rather than the Captor. In standalone form it may lack versatility but the Captor does a lot of things really well, it's solidly made and when integrated with a DAW, it opens up a world of quality direct recording possibilities.

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

The **Universal Audio OX** could be the answer to all of your recording, speaker emulation and attenuation needs but it's not cheap at **£1,170**. The **Fryette Load Box** (**£531**) has 200W power handling, switchable impedance, headphone out and deep tone shaping. Also check out the **SPL Cabulator** (**£551**) and **Rivera Rockcrusher Recording** (**£687**)

KEY FEATURES

Two Notes Torpedo Captor

- **PRICE** £199
- **DESCRIPTION** Loadbox, attenuator, DI box and speaker simulator. Made in China
- **POWER RATING** 100W RMS maximum
- **FRONT PANEL** Out level, phase, gtr/off/bass, line out (TRS), ground lift, speaker simulation DI (XLR), DC input
- **REAR PANEL** Speaker in, speaker out, -20dB speaker out
- **DIMENSIONS** 175 x 130 x 65mm
- **WEIGHT** 1.12kg/2.46lbs
- **OPTIONS** Available in 4-, 18- or 16-ohm versions
- **CONTACT** Audio Distribution Group +45 6574 8228 **www.two-notes.com audiodistributiongroup.com**

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Small, light and easy to power
+ Real world connectivity
+ Very usable tones

– Fixed attenuation
– No headphone out

Augmented with external processing and a bit of imagination, the Captor gets very close to the quality of some recently launched competitors, but for a lot less money

9/10

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DUNLOP
CRY BABY MINI 535Q

This miniaturised wah is still a Cry Baby, but has some surprisingly grown-up added tricks – so do you need half-size feet to use it? Richard Purvis gets rocking...

KEY FEATURES

Cry Baby Mini 535Q

- **PRICE** £159
- **DESCRIPTION** Wah pedal
- **CONTROLS** Boost switch, four-way range switch, boost level, Q (shape), bypass footswitch under toe of treadle
- **FEATURES** Red Fasel inductor, true bypass, powered by 9V battery or mains supply
- **DIMENSIONS** 132x77x66mm
- **CONTACT** Westside Distribution 0844 326 2000 **jimdunlop.com** **westsidedistribution.com**

The case of the 'incredible shrinking stompboxes' continues to take intriguing new turns. While the advantages of mini pedals are clear – more effects-per-square-inch of stage, less arm-ache on the way home – the current fad for miniaturisation hasn't really stretched to treadle-based units, such as wahs. This is down to one very simple factor: the sheer expense of foot-reduction surgery. But since 2015, the four-inch Cry Baby Mini has been proving that you can operate a half-size wah with a full-size hoof... and now it's even found room for some extra features.

No mere 'travel' option, the Mini 535Q is a fully featured wah for the discerning modern rocker and/or funkster. A red Fasel inductor creates the effect itself, and a four-position slider switch on the side allows you to change the upper and lower limits of the effect's frequency range (one up on the basic version's internal three-way switch). A separate Q control lets you choose how hard the midrange kicks out through the centre of the sweep, and on top of all that, there's now a switchable boost with its own volume control.

IN USE

Right then, what's it to be: ball of the foot hanging off the front, or heel hanging off the back? Neither is ideal, and a bit of both can feel even worse at first, but it certainly gets less awkward after a bit of practice. Adopt a relatively solid stance and you'll soon be rocking away in familiar style... even if we're not convinced it's possible to ride it with quite the same confidence as a full-size treadle. Will you miss the reassurance of a larger contact area? It's a personal thing, and so the age-old advice applies: if in doubt, try one out.

We have no reservations about this unit's other features. The archetypal wah tone is right there at your feet; and by combining the range switch and Q control, you can fine-tune its voice with great precision. Your key variables are how piercing it gets at the top of its travel, and how honky it is in the middle. This isn't about radical revoicing, just zoning in on the perfect wah shade for each occasion.

The boost switch offers up to 16dB of extra oomph for when you kick into your big *Voodoo Child* solo, and it's just a pity there's no way of turning this on and off on the fly... unless you're confident you can hit that little side-mounted switch with the tip of your right stiletto. Still, if you really want a footswitchable boost, you've got room for a separate one on your pedalboard now.

THE ARCHETYPAL WAH TONE IS HERE; AND BY COMBINING THE RANGE SWITCH AND Q CONTROL, YOU CAN FINE-TUNE ITS VOICE

LIKE THIS? TRY THESE...

The Morley Mini Wah (**£78**) isn't quite as titchy, but at 6.8 inches long, it's still smaller than the average guitarist's shoe. If you've room for an adult-sized wah, the obvious alternative is the **Cry Baby 535Q Multi-Wah** (**£163**), whose range switch has six positions to the Mini version's four. Or treat yourself to the multi-mode **Fulltone Clyde Deluxe Wah** (**£259**)

The Guitar Magazine VERDICT

+ Wails just like a big Cry Baby
+ Range and Q controls add very precise flexibility
+ Boost button is perfect for shrieking solos

– Tiny size takes a lot of getting used to
– Price is a lot less 'mini' than the standard model

A cute little wah with some useful bonus features, though not everyone will appreciate its scaled-down profile

8/10

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PART FIVE

DIY WORKSHOP

MARTIN GUITAR KIT

She's going to be a beauty. But there are still a few steps until we're strumming away. Huw Price is bound up in dots and slots as he continues work on our Martin guitar kit...

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1 To rout the binding channels, a bearing-guided router bit is used in a router table with cutting blades protruding by 1.5mm

2 With the rear binding channel cut, Patrick flips the body over to cut around the front

While other projects have preoccupied me over the last few months, the almost-completed Martin kit body has been occupying a corner of my office. Every now and again, I've been picking it up, dangling it from one finger and enjoying listening to the tap tones. Taking a pause has also given me the chance to think a few things through and make some decisions about aspects of the kit I was unhappy with. This time around, I'll be binding the body and making a rosewood fingerboard from scratch.

BRISTOL CHANNELS

Let's start with a confession and reveal that I don't enjoy routing acoustic-guitar bodies for binding. This is the fourth acoustic I've built, and I've never been entirely happy with the way the binding has turned out on any of the previous ones. There are two reasons for my ambivalence. Firstly, the sheer stress of knowing that one slip, or lapse in concentration, and the body can be ruined and all the hard work will be wasted – along with some lovely tonewood. Secondly, I've never been properly kitted out to do the job.

All my previous attempts have involved a Dremel with a Stewart-MacDonald mini-router accessory. It's certainly possible to rout the binding channel this way, but it's risky. Last time round, the flimsy cutter slipped in its shank, and by the time I'd gone all around the body, the channel ended up deeper than when I started. I swore never again to use a Dremel for this job.

Some people get great results with laminate trimmers that are designed for kitchen surfaces, but those can be expensive. Pro luthiers often build elaborate body jigs, mounting a full-sized router in runners that allow it to ride the contours of a body. Since I so rarely need to do this, I decide not to invest in a laminate trimmer or build a routing jig. Instead, I head to Bristol to get my luthier mate to do it.

With his considerable skill and vast experience, Patrick does the job using a router table and a riser that compensates for the slight arch in the front and back of the body. A special router bit is needed however, with a recessed guide bearing that's smaller in radius than the cutter.

The bearing follows the outer body edge and since it's 1.5mm

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3 The neck pocket is opened up after the binding channels are routed and before the binding is glued

smaller in radius than the cutter, the depth of the cut should be perfect for the binding I'm using. Patrick sets the cutter height to 6mm and within minutes, the binding channels are routed. You might call this cheating, but I'm going with pragmatism!

IN A BIND

With the binding channel cut so accurately, gluing the binding is easy, and clean up will be minimal once the glue has set. Although the kit arrived with black binding, it was never my intention to use it. All along, I wanted to build something quite plain and unornamented, so I order up some 6mm x 1.5mm ivory binding from Rothko And Frost.

It's sold in 1,600mm lengths, so each strip will get around the body without any need for a join at the tailblock. I wouldn't recommend WELD-ON 16 binding cement for multicoloured binding, because the layers tend to melt into one another. However, I'm only using single-ply ivory with no purfling, so it's ideal for the job.

Routing binding channels leaves wood burr around the edges. While it may be preferable to clean up the channels themselves if there are any raised sections, the edge burr can be left alone. Removing it risks damaging the channel edges and when the binding is glued, pressure from the binding tape will flatten the burr and it will solidify with the glue. It's best to leave it if you want a clean body-to-binding-edge line.

Another precaution worth considering is protecting the spruce prior to gluing the binding. Binding tape is so sticky, it's best not to use it with soft woods such as spruce, but even regular masking tape can pull out wood fibres when it's being removed. To prevent this, I spray the edges of the top with Manchester Guitar Tech's cellulose sanding sealer. The spray is directed from the centre of the body to the outside edges to prevent the sanding sealer getting into the binding channel – much like spraying a sunburst.

I'll be using grain filler on the mahogany later in the finishing process, so I avoid spraying the sides. Sanding sealer may prevent any stain in the grain filler from penetrating the wood and the result could be a patchy and uneven colour. At this point, I also use a small saw and files to open up the

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4 To protect the wood, cellulose sanding sealer is sprayed around the top edges and masking tape is preferred to binding tape

5 With the masking tape removed, there is some glue squeeze-out

6 After sanding off the dried glue and the excess binding, we get a clean edge between the wood and the binding

neck pocket. There's nothing about gluing the binding that hasn't been covered in previous workshop articles. The WELD-ON 16 adhesive is liberally applied, about 15cm at a time, with the binding pressed into the binding channel quickly and firmly before being held in position by pre-cut strips of masking tape

After a full day, the masking tape is removed and 120-grit adhesive paper on a flat sanding block is used, to remove all the glue squeeze-out and to level the binding. At last, the body really is complete and I can move onto the neck.

GET ON 'BOARD

While I've reviewed several guitars with fibre-composite fingerboards and bridges, this is the first opportunity I've had to examine one as a component rather than part of a pre-built guitar. Pinching the Richlite 'board between two fingers, I look for the best node point and soon discover that, to my ears, there isn't one. The only sound this Richlite 'board can produce is a soggy thunk. I'm more used to rosewood 'boards that produce pure ringing notes with long sustain, so it's a bit underwhelming.

Sadly, the CITES restrictions on rosewood are a well-intentioned but blunt instrument that prohibits Martin and various other guitar-kit companies from exporting the stuff. While I have every sympathy for those companies and this ongoing problem, it doesn't have to be a problem for me. A 10-minute trawl on eBay produces a rosewood fingerboard blank for £29 and a rosewood bridge to match for £6.49 – both from a UK supplier. The bridge merely requires some final sanding, but the fingerboard blank has to be turned into a clone of the Martin 'board.

Although I'm disinclined to use the Richlite board on a hand-built, all-solid acoustic, it does make a very useful routing template.

I begin by placing the Richlite 'board onto the rosewood blank and drawing around it with a pencil. I need to saw down one edge, but pencil marks are hard to see on rosewood. To make things easier, I lay masking tape along the 'board, leaving it 3mm proud of the pencil line. The masking tape guides my hand saw and, before long, I have a rough-cut rosewood fingerboard that's just slightly oversized.

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ECC83-S	**10 Pcs**	**£7.50 Each**	**EL84**	**16 Pcs**	**£7.20 Each**
ECC83-S	**20 Pcs**	**£7.20 Each**	**6L6GC**	**16 Pcs**	**£13.20 Each**
ECC83-S	**40 Pcs**	**£6.90 Each**	**6V6GTS**	**16 Pcs**	**£12.00 Each**
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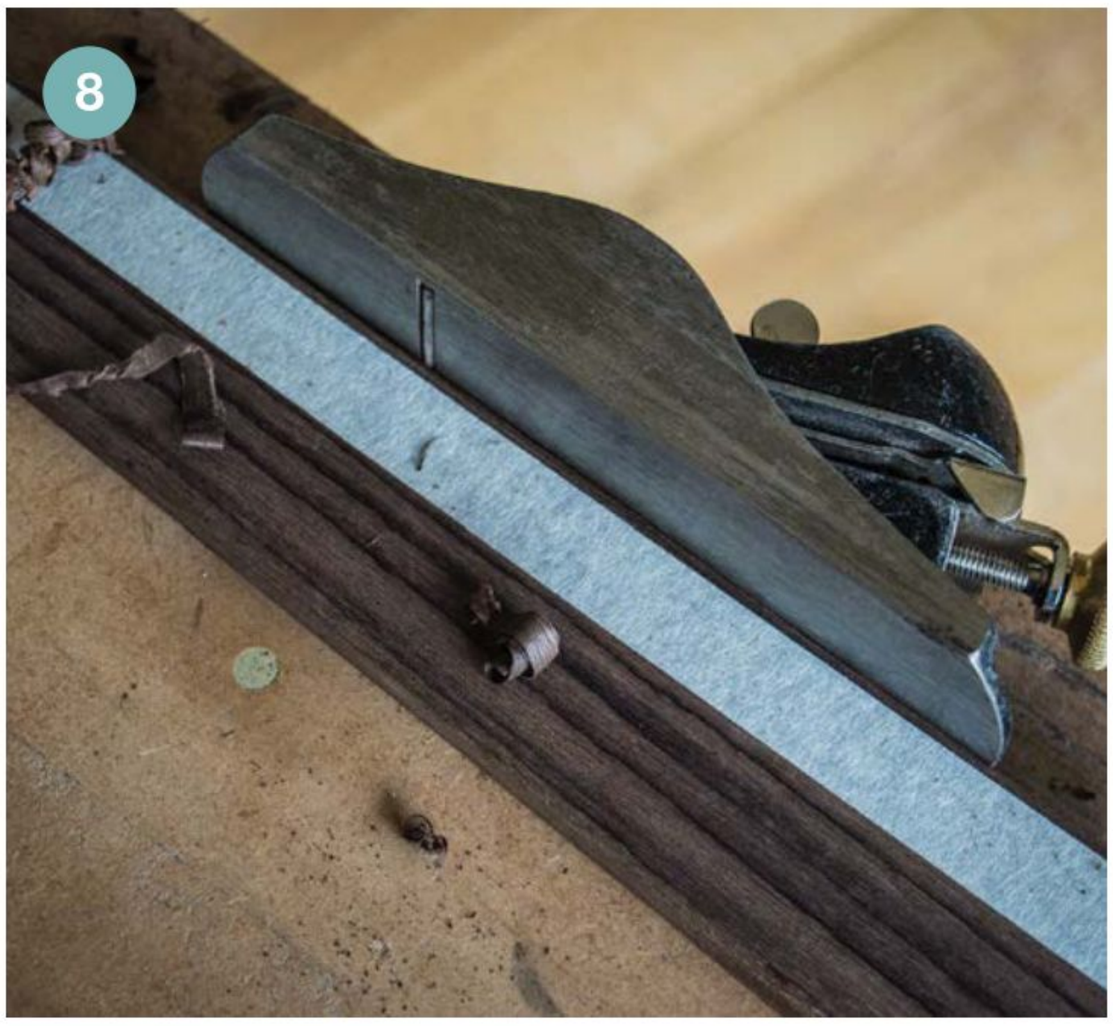

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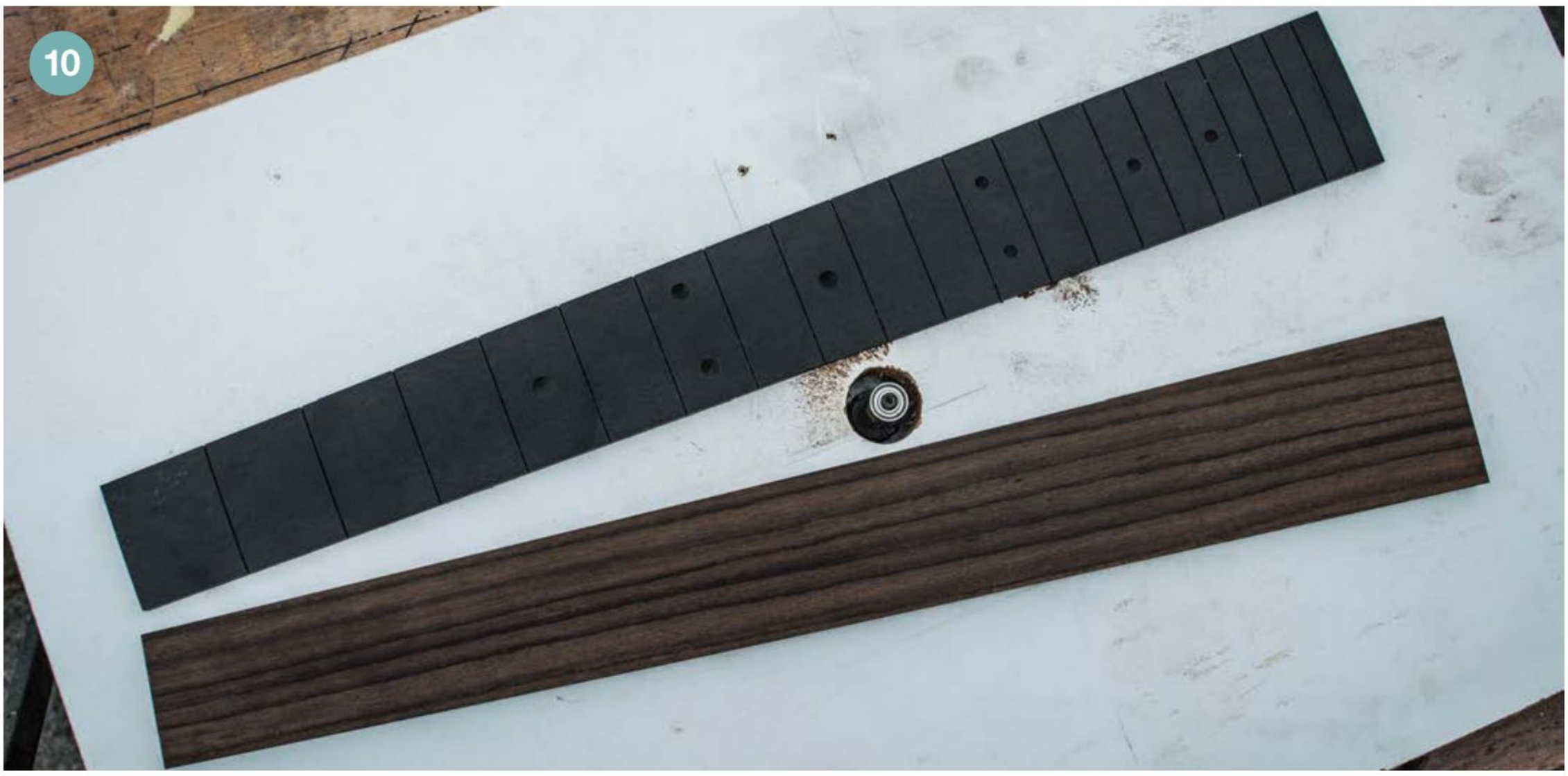

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The rosewood blank is transferred to my shooting 'board and I apply fresh masking tape right onto the pencil lines. Once clamped tightly, a block plane is used to bring the edges very close to the lines, and the rosewood 'board is ready for routing. Double-sided tape is applied to the Richlite 'board's flat back surface and it's placed over its rosewood counterpart, leaving a millimetre or so of excess all around the edge. Properly aligned, the 'boards are pressed together and I set up my own table router with a guide bearing bit.

Working my way carefully along the 'board edges, I soon have clean-cut lines that conform perfectly with the Richlite board. A handsaw cuts the two ends about 1mm proud, and the router brings them flush. Having carefully prised the 'boards apart, the Richlite and rosewood 'boards are now identical in shape and size – but the rosewood is about 2mm too thick.

Over the years, I've gotten to know the guys at my local joinery quite well, and they have helped me on various guitar projects. They were happy to run the rosewood board through their thickness sander and that saved me a lot of effort with the block plane.

Remember that it's always worth asking, because people are usually happy to help out – especially if you're prepared to slip them a fiver for a couple of minutes' work.

SLOT MACHINING

Again, the 'boards are very carefully aligned and taped together. With an engineering set square, I mark the fret-slot positions of the Richlite 'board onto the rosewood 'board. If you take your time, accurate results can be achieved. With the 'boards separated again, I use a craft knife to extend the pencil lines over the edges of the 'board and after verifying the spacing with digital callipers, I score all the fret positions into the top of the 'board. Scoring the wood with a sharp knife produces reference lines that are easier to see than pencil.

PINBALL WIZARD

Martin supplied the neck with indexing pins installed and corresponding holes in the back of the Richlite 'board. Rather than remove them and make my own, I decide to make corresponding pin holes in the back of the rosewood 'board. The pin holes are exactly 5mm in diameter, so I use a 5mm

7 This rectangular rosewood fingerboard will be made into a clone of the Richlite 'board supplied with the kit

8 The rosewood 'board supplied with the kit after rough cutting

9 The 'boards are stuck firmly together using double-sided tape and a guided router bit cleans up the edges

10 With the two ends trimmed, the outside dimensions of the two 'boards are identical, but the rosewood one needs thinning

11 Again, the 'boards are taped together and an engineering square is used to mark the fret positions

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12 Note the index pin holes drilled through the Richlite 'board at the 1st and 11th frets, with the corresponding holes on the rosewood 'board

13 Two mahogany blocks taped to the outer edges of the mitre block narrow the slots and minimise unwanted movement from the fret saw

14 The slots are done and once the 'board is radiused and fine-sanded, the pearl dots will shine brightly

bit to extend them all the way through the Richlite 'board. This time, the two 'boards are aligned and then clamped together with the rear of the rosewood 'board over the Richlite 'board's radiused top surface. I mark the depth I want onto the drill bit with masking tape, and begin drilling.

The holes in the Richlite 'board guide the bit and I soon have index pin holes in the rosewood 'board that slot right onto the index pins when I try a test fit. The Richlite 'board is now toast and there's no going back, but gluing the rosewood 'board should be easy.

DOT MARKING

It's time to inlay the dot markers in the rosewood 'board. Martin's 'board is laid out with numerous dots in various sizes, but I prefer a simpler layout. The centre points are located for the 7th-, 9th- and 15th-fret markers, then I mark two positions equidistant between the 11th and 12th frets, both 9/16-inches from the edges of the 'board. Since the parts all came from the US, the dots require Imperial drill bits. If you're doing this, accurately measure the diameter of your marker dots with callipers and try your luck at a really good hardware store. Callipers or a micrometer are the best tools for measuring the diameter.

When drilling, I start the hole with the drill spinning in reverse to minimise chip-out, and then switch direction to achieve the required depth. Super Glue is pooled into each hole and the pearl dots are tapped in with a rubber mallet. Go gently, because the dots can shatter. A little extra Super Glue is applied on top of the dots, to solidify the rosewood around the hole edges.

SUPER SAW AWAY

A fret file has lurked in my toolbox for quite a while, but I don't own a specialist mitre block for cutting fret slots. Accuracy is paramount here, and the saw must stay square and cut into the wood at 90°, so the frets will seat properly. Mitre blocks from regular DIY shops tend to have very wide slots, so they're unsuitable for a fret saw that's only 0.5mm wide. I decide to adapt the small wooden mitre block that I do have by fixing wooden guides to the sides of the block with double-sided tape.

With the saw placed in the slots, I press each guide piece firmly against the side of the blade and then press it against the mitre

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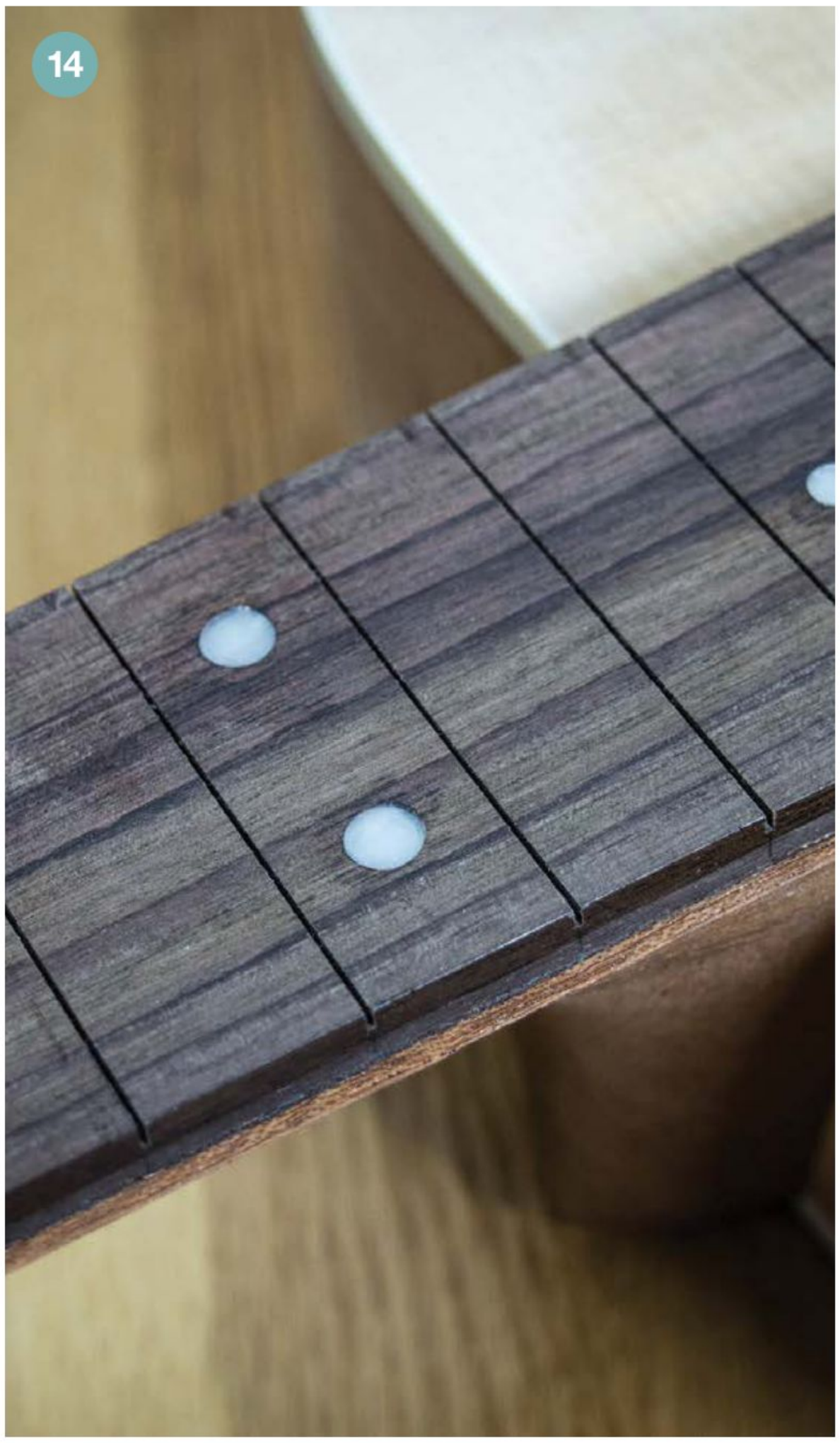
block to fix it in position. In effect, I'm narrowing the slot in the mitre block to guide the fret saw properly. Since the rosewood 'board has been tapered to match the Richlite 'board, I mark the centre point at each end. A centre line is then drawn on a straight length of scrap wood and the rosewood 'board is aligned, then taped onto the wood.

Pressed against the inside edge of the mitre block, the wood's straight edge keeps the fingerboard square and true. After placing masking tape depth stop markers onto the side of the saw blade, I very carefully position the first scored fret line under the blade, clamp the 'board down at each end and cut the first slot.

It goes really well and after repeating the procedure 19 times, all the slots are done. Cutting the actual slots is quick, especially if you remember to apply beeswax to the saw periodically. The crucial bit is taking the time to set the blade and 'board as accurately as possible for every slot. It would have been so much easier to use the Richlite 'board, but despite the extra work, I'm pleased I didn't. The new 'board still needs to be radiused and fretted before I can assemble the neck and fit it onto the body, but worry not – all that will come in the next instalment.

NEXT MONTH...

Now that he's built up a head of steam, Huw continues working on our Martin kit project with neck construction and carving, tuner and bridge location, and the all important neck set...

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HISTORY

ALL ABOUT... TADEO GOMEZ

Fender's greatest-ever neck carver was an orphaned migrant worker who walked a thousand miles to get to America. Huw Price profiles the legendary Tadeo Gomez...

Pick up any book on Fender history and check out the 1950s factory pictures for proof that Fender's employees were a mixed group. Look at some of the signatures inside the tweed amps and you'll encounter the names of Lydia Sanchez, Lupe Lopez and Maybelle Ortega. The staff also included Geraldine Herrera working on lap steels and Art Cordero on pickguard duty, among many others. Indeed, many of the most iconic Fender guitars and amps ever were crafted by members of the Latino community back in the 50s and 60s.

And then there was the worker commonly identified by his initials 'TG'. Besides those who worked most closely with Leo Fender, the company's most famous employee from that era is almost certainly Tadeo Gomez.

Today, many regard him as the greatest neck carver of the 1950s, and his style of shaping necks has influenced countless guitar makers. These days, any 1950s Fender guitar with a neck that can be attributed to Gomez will be worth a premium.

WALKING THE LINE

Tadeo Gomez was born in 1902, in a town called La Cueva in the Mexican state of Jalisco.

> TADEO GOMEZ'S STYLE OF SHAPING NECKS HAS INFLUENCED COUNTLESS GUITAR MAKERS

Both his parents died within two weeks of each other when he was just 12 years old, and Tadeo was left to take care of his younger siblings. His older brothers had already left Mexico and were working in a silver mine in Jerome, Arizona, so Tadeo decided to join them when he was 13 or 14. Walking was the only way he could get there, so he followed the railway tracks for over 1,000 miles, surviving on banana peels and other leftover food that passengers had thrown from train windows. Tadeo eventually made it and began working in the mines, where one of his brothers would later be killed.

He married a woman named Petra in 1925 and they followed the crops to Northern California. By 1943, Tadeo, Petra and their six children were living in the small city of La Habra, in Orange County, California. In his book, *The Blackguard*, Nacho Baños notes that Tadeo was almost certainly working for Leo Fender during 1950, because his signature has been found on some very early Broadcaster necks. La Habra is just five miles away from Fullerton, where Leo's factory was famously located, and Tadeo's son Benjamin

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recalled that "there used to be quite a few from La Habra that worked at Fender".

Tadeo would occasionally take his son to the Fender factory, and Benjamin remembers his father often worked under a canopy. He told the *La Habra Journal*: "Dad would be outside sanding and shaping the necks. Sometimes, he carved a little to get it just right. He had taught himself woodworking. Nothing was too hard for him to learn."

THE TADEO TAPER

Two features appear to characterise the necks shaped by Tadeo Gomez. Some credit him with developing Fender's 'soft V' profile, and he's also known for shaping the soft transition from the back of the headstock to the area behind the nut. Nacho Baños declares that Tadeo's style has become "a master reference by which today's reproduction necks are judged" and some people even call this the 'Tadeo taper'.

Once he was satisfied with a neck, Tadeo would initial and date the end of the truss rod in pencil; then these marks would be sealed under the lacquer finish. However, there is some debate and controversy about whether every one of the necks with Tadeo's signature was actually carved by Tadeo himself.

Much of this arises from inconsistencies in the handwriting, because some Initials appear squared off while others are quite rounded. There are also necks signed 'TAD' and even 'TADEO', and it has been speculated that Tadeo eventually took on more of a foreman's role, supervising neck carving and authorising other workers to sign the necks off once he had approved them. During the course of researching this article, we also found pictures of '51 and '52 Telecasters with 'TADEO' and 'TG' signatures in the neck pockets. It's been noted that things were pretty chaotic at the Fender factory prior to eventual VP Forrest White's arrival, and that employees would

A Fender Strat pictured at Capsule Music in Toronto with neck initialled by Tadeo Gomez and dated October 1954

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work all over the shop. So maybe Tadeo routed a few bodies while he was at Fender, too.

TIME OUT

Tadeo left Fender in 1957 due to disagreements with a new supervisor who felt that his work wasn't up to the required standard. Instead, he took a job as a carpenter working on the construction of Disneyland and this job lasted until the mid 1960s, when he returned to Fender. By that time, Leo Fender had sold his company to the giant CBS Corporation. The subsequent CBS years were very much the dark days of Fender, when the company's reputation was almost ruined by questionable management. The greatest neck shaper in Fender's history was re-employed as a maintenance man.

Some cite this as an example of CBS's ineptitude, because Tadeo's expertise could surely have been better utilised. No doubt this is partly true, but Fender's manufacturing process had evolved since the late 1950s. Neck fashions had changed, too, and by the mid 1960s, none of the major manufacturers were making the sort of chunky V-shaped necks Tadeo was known for.

It might also be instructive to look at Tadeo's birthdate and do the maths. He began his second stint when he was in his mid 60s, and carving necks by hand is quite arduous. Perhaps Tadeo was happy to be doing less physically demanding maintenance work and besides which, the Fender factory was still making pretty great necks during that time.

Tadeo's second term at Fender ended in 1969, after an accident at work. He was carrying out some electronic maintenance work when he received a shock that threw him off a ladder.

AFTER CBS

When they first moved to La Habra, Tadeo built a shop for his wife Petra that they called La Chiquita Market. Tadeo had always helped out at the shop after work and, according to his grandson Jim, they did great business selling 20-cent snow cones known as 'raspados' – often making up to $600 per day. People would come from miles around to buy them. Tadeo continued running La Chiquita with Petra until 1985, but was forced to close it due to ill health. The following year, he died from a cardio-respiratory arrest brought on by bronchitis and an infection. Petra passed away in 1989.

Until recently, Tadeo's family knew little about his exploits at Fender. One night, his grandson, Jim Gomez, was surfing the net and was shocked to discover Tadeo is actually quite famous. Jim, who has served three terms as mayor of La Habra, has since tried to learn as much as he can about his legacy. The family did have the 1928 Model T Ford that Tadeo brought from Jerome to La Habra, but sadly, Tadeo never brought a guitar home from work to leave as a family heirloom. According to Jim, his grandfather would occasionally bring home factory-reject necks for the children to play with, but they are all long gone.

Jim Gomez also told us that La Habra was still segregated when Tadeo built La Chiquita in an area designated for migrant workers. Jim recalls his grandfather's kindness and compassion towards those people who suffered great hardship. He would give anybody credit in his store, and if they couldn't pay it off, he never chased them for the money. Family was the most important thing in Tadeo's life and Jim Gomez recalls a wonderful grandfather. He still thinks about him every day, but it's good to know that there are people all over the world who still think about Tadeo Gomez from time to time – and many of the guitars he helped build are still out there making music.

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CHORD CLINIC

This month, we take on the 13th chord and find that it can be major, minor or flat. Rod Fogg is undivided...

Chords are built in thirds, and if you want to build a 13th chord, you would start on the root and build upwards – adding the third, fifth, seventh, ninth, 11th and 13th. That makes a seven-note chord, so on a six-string guitar, something's got to give. In all the examples in figure 1, it is the 11th that has been omitted. The two five-note chords, E13 and F♯7♯9♭13 (that's 'F sharp seven sharp nine flat thirteen' – keep up at the back, there) also leave out the fifth of the chord.

In fact, the 11th can coexist quite happily with the notes in a minor chord, such as the Bm13 found here, but in a dominant or major chord such as E13 or Amaj13, the 11th clashes unpleasantly with the major third and so is usually absent.

You can play figure 1 as a four bar chord sequence, giving each chord four beats to the bar like an old-school jazzer, or else just hold each chord for four beats and enjoy the richness of the harmony. Incidentally, as we will see, 13th and flat 13th chords are often combined with sharp or flat ninths and sharp 11ths. After you have tried looping figure 1 around try advancing on to figure 2 to create an eight-bar chord sequence, this time with a dreamy ending on one of those maj13♯11 chords that we just mentioned. These can be an acquired taste; play the sequence a few times and see if it grows on you.

We are staying in A major for all of this Chord Clinic for two reasons. Firstly, it should make it easier to compare the different ways round this II-V-I chord sequence (with occasional help from chord VI to make it turnaround satisfactorily).

Secondly, we can use the open sixth (E) and fifth (A) strings in the bass to provide strong root movement – we'll have more to say about this when we get to figure 7.

In the meantime, dig in to figure 3 which presents another route around the same progression, although this time the first chord is B13, not Bm13. We also used a trick known as a tritone substitution to slip in a C9♭13 instead of figure 1's F♯ chord.

Figure 1

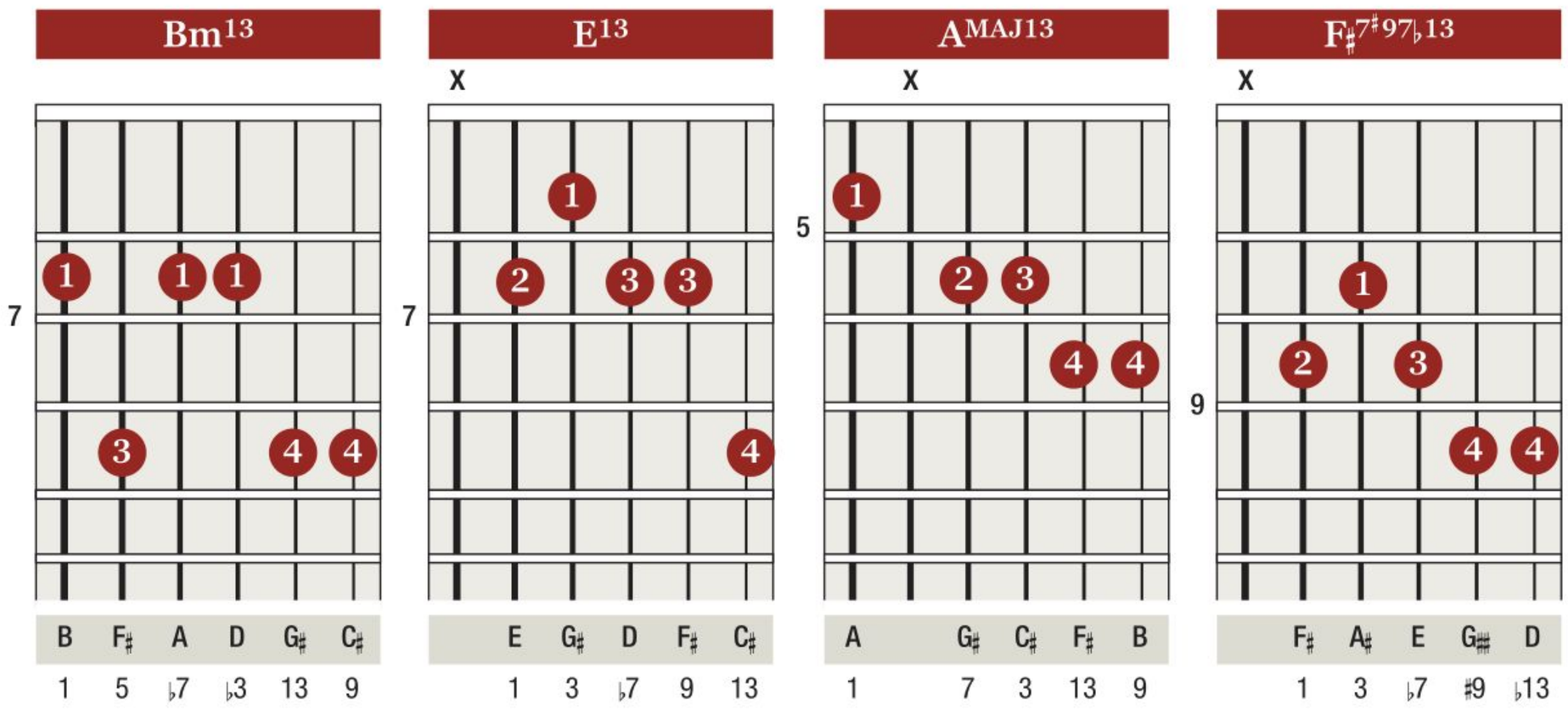

Figure 2

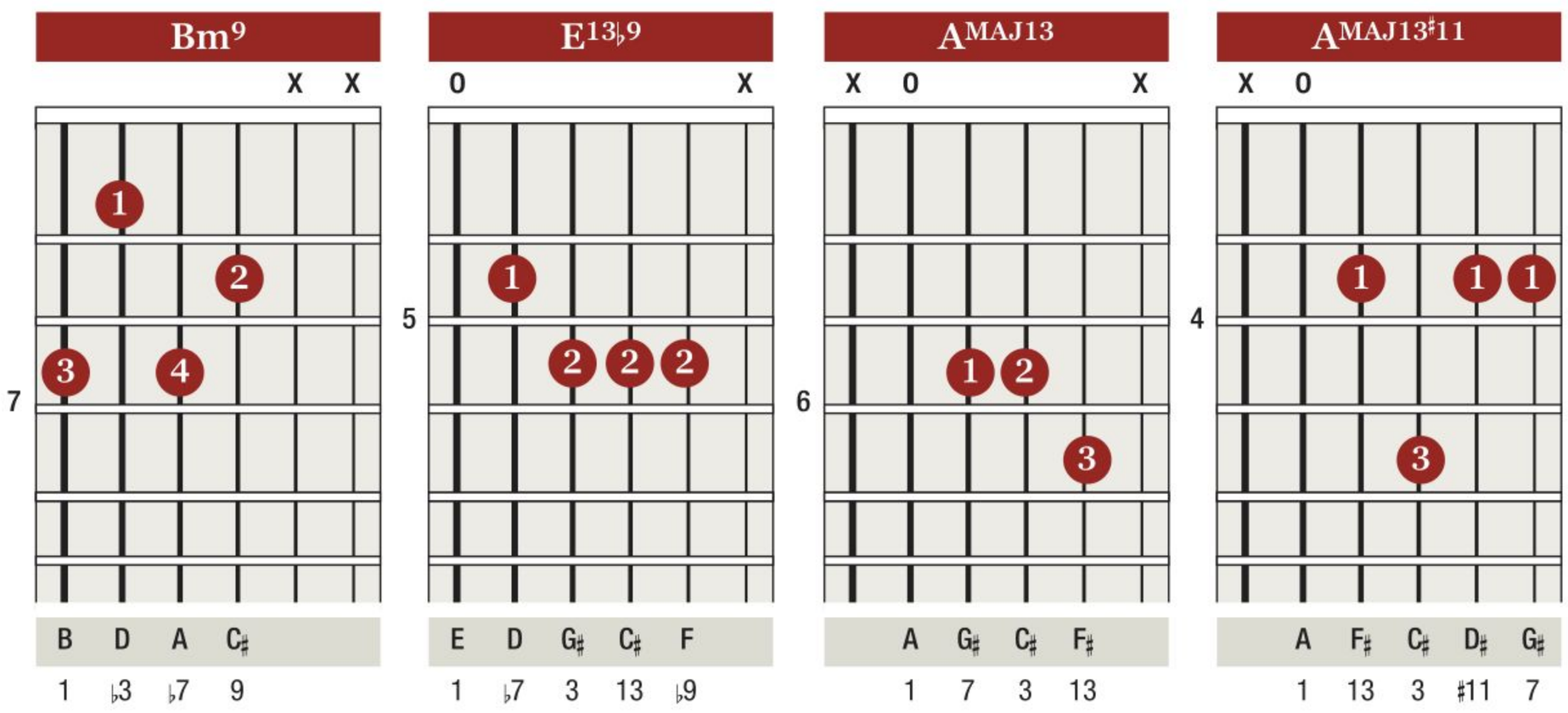

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Figure 3

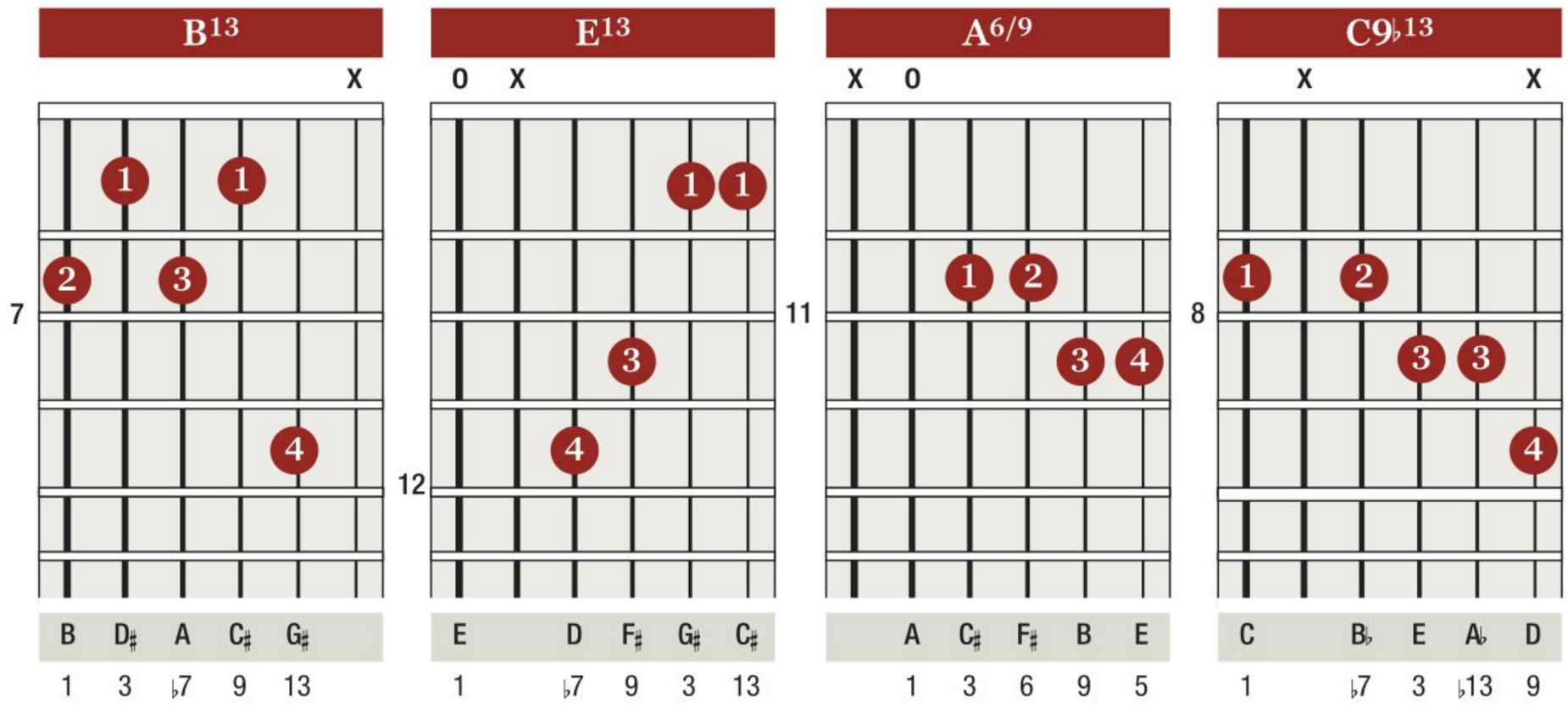


Figure 4

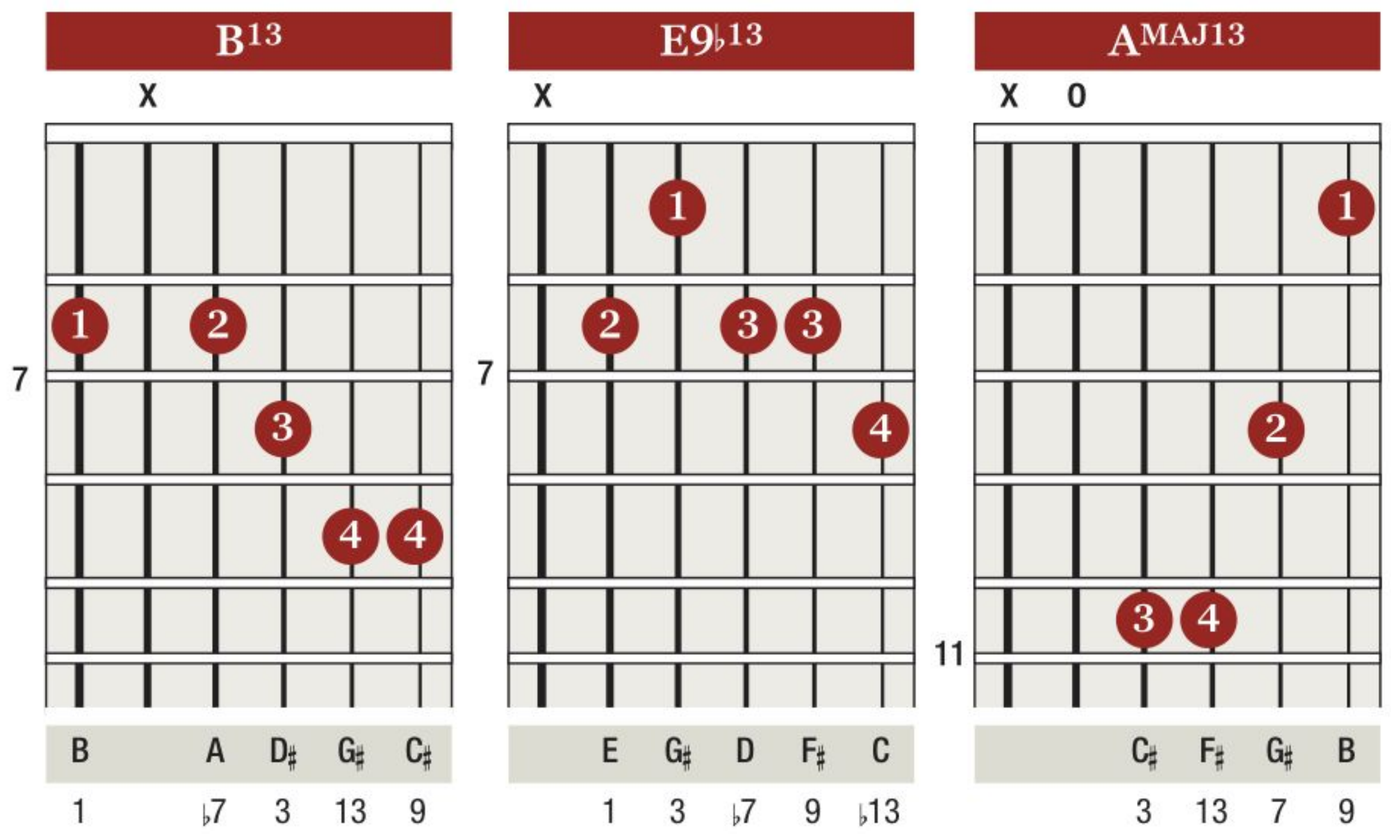
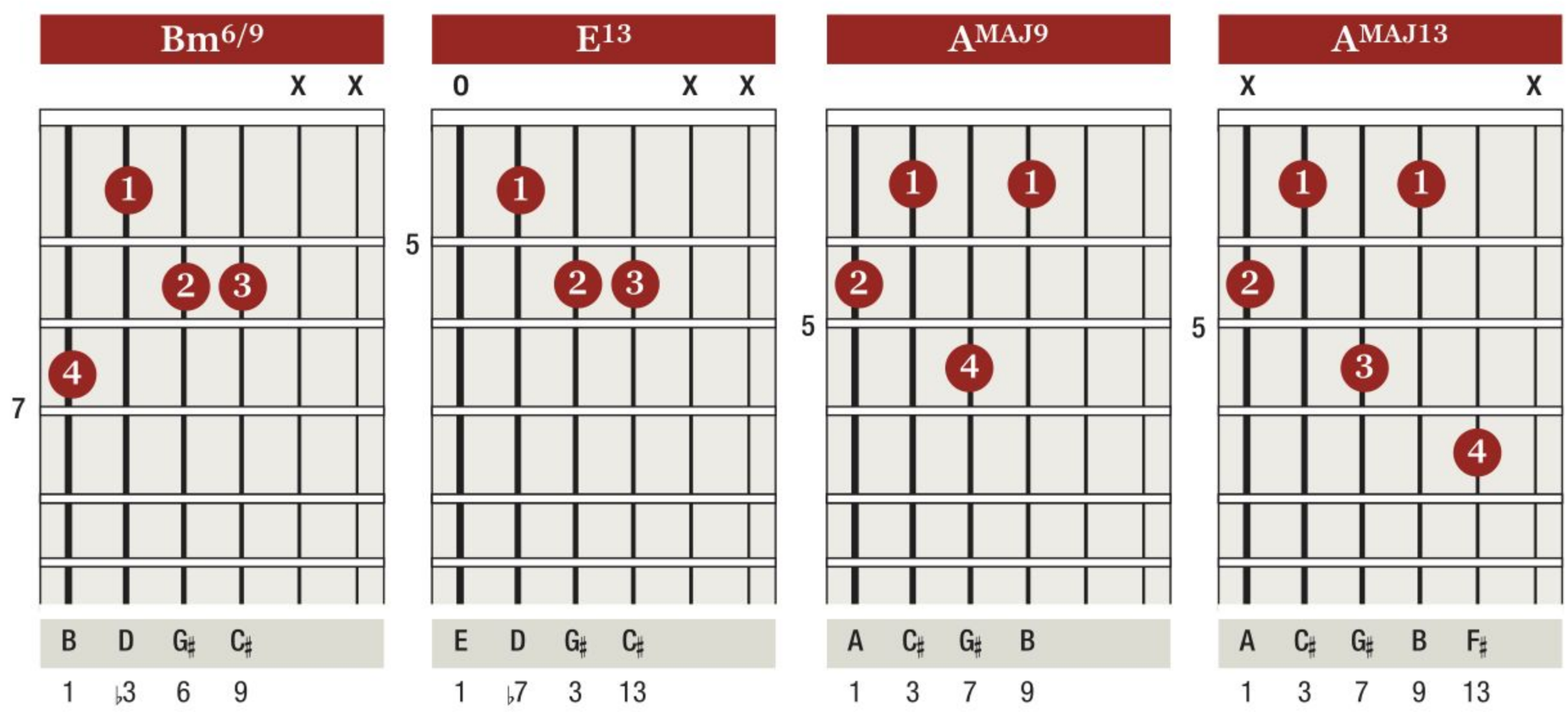


Figure 5



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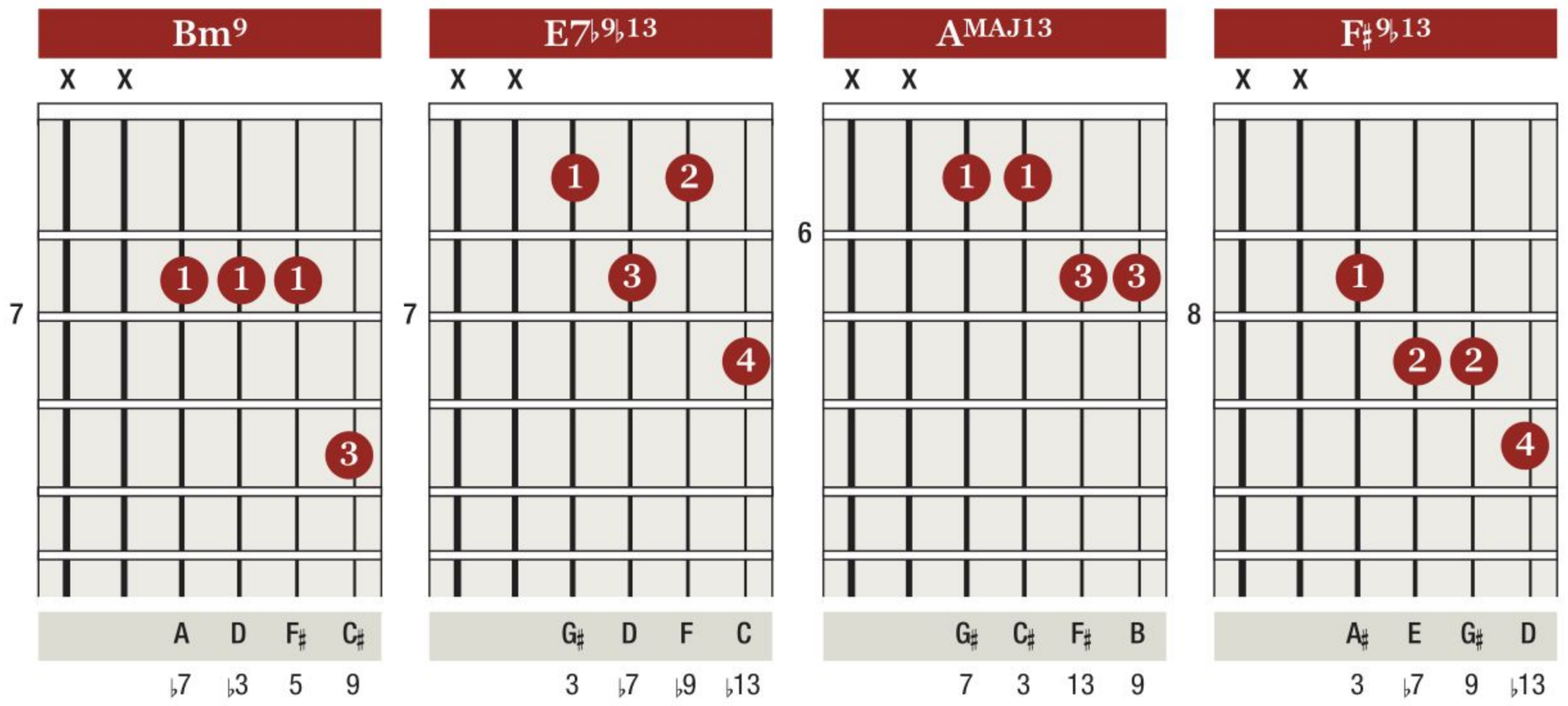
It's at this point that the fun really begins, because it turns out that you can take the first chord from any of these examples, follow it with the second chord from any example and, yes, you guessed it, end up on any third chord. Then go on to either the F♯ or C chord from figures 1 or 3 to go around your made-up sequence again, or play another bar of any of the A major chords to end. Welcome to Chord Clinic mix and match! Let's throw a few more options into the mix with figure 4, which ends on a beautiful close-voiced alternative Amaj13.

You've probably noticed that one of the technical hurdles to overcome here is the difficulty of stopping more than one string with pretty well any finger. We're probably all used to the idea of making a barre and stopping several strings with finger one, the index finger. In these examples, fingers two, three and four all get in on the act occasionally, stopping as many as three strings. If you're playing fingerstyle, feel free to modify the fingerings; the given fingerings are intended to allow the chords to be played with a pick and for unwanted notes to be muted.

Figure 5 is an unusual one, starting with Bm6/9, which doesn't qualify as a 13th chord – because although the sixth is present, there is no seventh, so it's called a 'minor six-nine'. Like the Amaj13 in figure 2, the E13 chord here is reduced to its absolute minimum, root, third, seventh and 13th. The lack of a ninth in these chords would cause some to call them Amaj6/7 and E7/6, but we're not so picky. Note the first three chords are deliberately voiced on the lowest strings of the guitar.

We mentioned that we would get back to talking about roots at some point. Figure 6 leaves out all the root notes, but still makes a valid and workable chord sequence. The idea is that most of the time there is a bass player who is responsible for the root movement, freeing the guitar player to only be responsible for the cute and delicious higher harmonies. Enjoyed mixing and matching and we'll be back with more next month.

Figure 6



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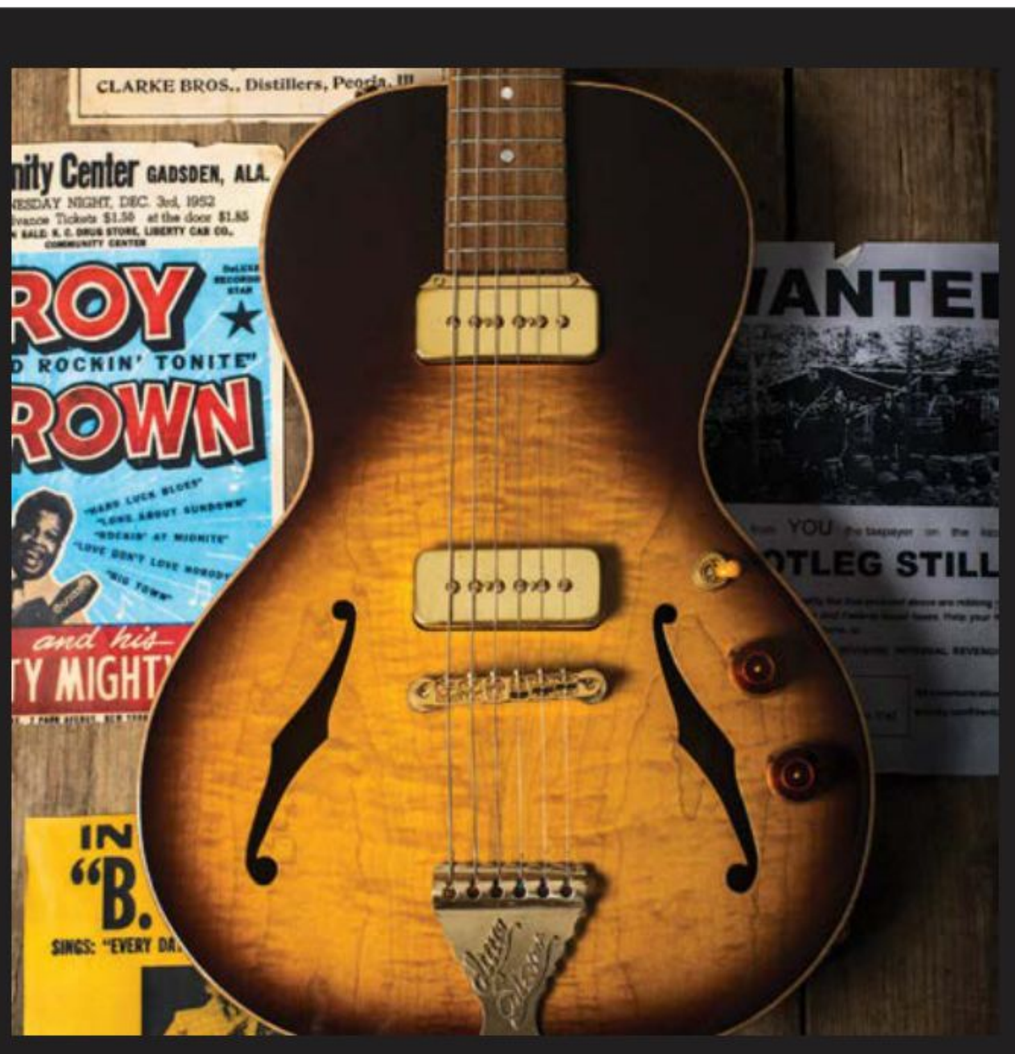

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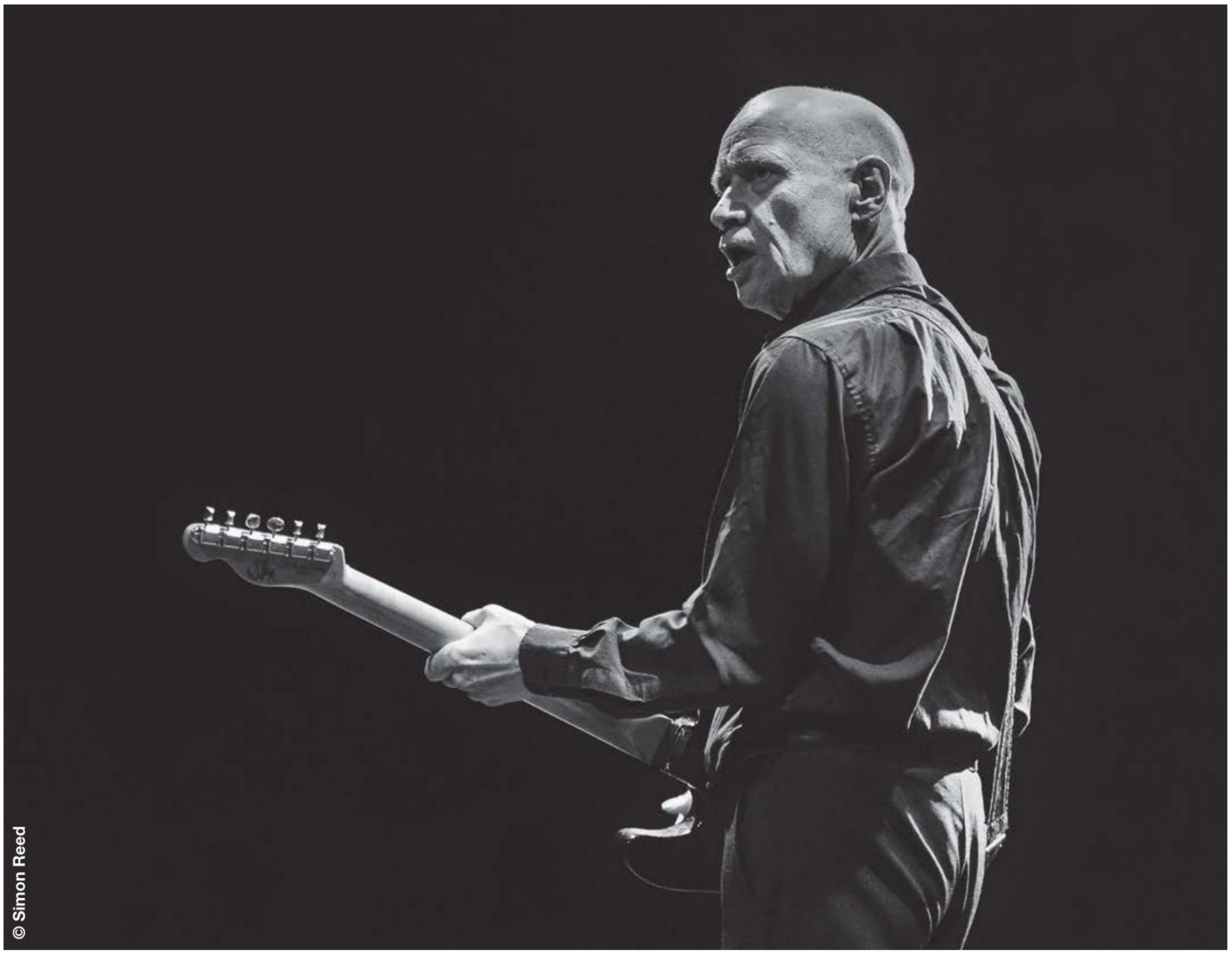

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WILKO JOHNSON

The former Dr Feelgood rhythm king on Teles, jelly babies, determined expressions and avoiding on-stage karate...

1 I couldn't live without my...
"I use a Fender Wilko Johnson Telecaster. I've still got the 1962 Telecaster that I bought in 1965 – my first proper guitar, and the 1962 Telecaster I used from Dr Feelgood times until Fender made my Tele, which is based on a standard 1962 model. I've also got a 1962 Stratocaster. That's more or less all the guitars I've ever owned. I love them all – but the Wilko Tele is the one I use."

2 In another life I'd have been...
"I wanted to be a painter – I had to choose between that and rock 'n' roll when Dr Feelgood took over my life. What do you want to do – starve in a garret painting masterpieces, or ride in a Cadillac and get all the girls?"

3 The moment it all started...
"I think I just drifted into it. There wasn't a moment."

4 The one that got away...
"There's not really a guitar that got away. I've still got the only four guitars I ever had, and they're easily replaceable should I lose them!"

5 My Spinal Tap moment...
"I was on stage at Wembley stadium in 1972, backing the pop singer Heinz at the big Wembley rock 'n' roll show. I'd never played anywhere bigger than a pub back room, so Wembley stadium was nervous-making. I was getting on okay, but then Heinz threw an Elvis-style karate kick in my direction and knocked every string on my guitar right out of tune. It was like a bad dream trying to get back in tune while the show went on in front of this massive audience. Bad dream."

6 The best advice that I've ever been given...
"Whether through stupidity or egotism I never listen to advice, but here's mine – 'If you play a bum note, keep a determined expression on your face and glare at the keyboard player'."

7 The first thing I play when I pick up a guitar...
"I very rarely pick up a guitar – even my own. But I suppose if I did pick up a new one, I'd bash out some familiar riff of my own to see how it played."

8 The most important thing on my rider...
"Jelly Babies! They're useful for raising blood sugar levels, as I'm diabetic. Actually they usually get pigged by the band and crew..."

9 My guilty pleasure...
"The 12-bar blues. It's a pleasure because it's just about all I can play. And I ain't guilty 'cause I ain't to blame. Just three chords and I ain't ashamed!"

10 If I could just play one thing...
"There are many songs I can't play. My style is quite simple and rather limited, so I leave the tricky stuff to other people!"

Wilko Johnson's new album, *Blow Your Mind*, is out 15 June

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